HIS ALIEN ENEMY

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HIS ALIEN ENEMY

BY THE HONBLE.
MRS. WALTER FORBES
AUTHOR OF
A GENTLEMAN," "DUMO," "LEROUX," "NAMELESS," ETC., ETC.

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1918

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To

MARIE SAUNDERSON

"UN POSTE DANGEREUX ÉTAIT À PRENDRE
ICI. . . . ET ME VOICI."

Edmond Rostand: "L'Aiglon."

PREFACE

I TAKE no responsibility for the opinions of the characters in this book. Those of our "Alien Enemies" I have, at one time or another, heard expressed by persons belonging to those nationalities, and whether or no they correctly represent the feelings of their countries time will decide.

EVELINE M. FORBES.

47, ONSLOW GARDENS, S.W.

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HIS ALIEN ENEMY

PROLOGUE

GEOFFREY LEIGH was not in his room at the Foreign Office when Colonel Armstrong arrived, just as the clock upon the mantelpiece struck eight.

Dinner was laid for two at a small table set near one of the large windows looking out directly upon the Horse Guards Parade, and indirectly towards St. James's Park. It was merely a question of frontage: you stood straight for the one and sideways for the other. Colonel Armstrong tried both. The sense of unencumbered space was very restful after a long afternoon spent in crowded streets and still more crowded rooms, and it was the first cool place he had been in that day.

The room itself was lofty; although nominally on the second floor, it was up four flights of stairs, since, in the diplomatic language of the staircase, the basement does not count, so the first floor is halfway up the building, and the height of the rooms on all the lower floors brings the windows of those high up apparently on a level with the chimneys of Carlton House Terrace, towards which they face, across the Horse

Guards Parade. The traffic round the bend of St. James's Park seemed strangely trivial viewed from this height, and the people crossing the Parade were curiously dwarfed. It seemed to Colonel Armstrong that he had been lifted suddenly out of the swirling stream of London society and was surveying it with utter detachment, as if from some comfortable star. It was certainly very refreshing. The trees of the Prime Minister's garden made a little oasis of cool, fresh greenery on his right, and to his left the lawns and foliage of the Park, broken here and there by the soft glow of flower-beds, their colours enthereallised by the evening light, stretched out towards the Mall, which the thick summer leafage almost concealed. It was one of those clear, still nights when the sky yet holds the blue it has worn all day, but deepened, softened, as a face softens under the touch of sleep. The window was wide open, and the light breeze, which just ruffled the crests of the trees, slightly stirred George Armstrong's hair as he leaned upon the window-sill and looked past the Duke of York's Column towards Waterloo Place, and thanked Heaven that he had declined a theatre-party, preceded by dinner at the Ritz, in favour of a *tête-à-tête* meal with Geoffrey Leigh. This thanksgiving had scarcely died upon his lips when an inner door opened and Geoffrey came in.

Tall and slight, with a thin intellectual face and short-sighted eyes, which looked at papers through his glasses and at people over them,

there was a certain distinction in his whole bearing that lay neither in features nor in carriage, though it informed both; it was of the whole personality. Something about him gave the impression that here was a man who could do things, and whom other men would obey. It struck George Armstrong oddly as he turned to meet him, remembering him as his fag at Eton; he also, however, remembered him later as Captain of the Boats—and how he had captained them!

"Awfully sorry, Armstrong; I'm afraid you've been waiting an abominable time, but work's been rather heavy to-day and I couldn't get up till five minutes to eight. However, here is our dinner, so let's begin."

"That's all right," Colonel Armstrong answered, as he took the place facing his host and looking out towards the Park. "Don't be insulted if I say I haven't missed you. Your window has given me the first breath of fresh air I've had to-day."

"This room is always cool," Geoffrey answered, "and that, after all, is the only essential one wants in a room. One can make it warm."

"If I didn't know what a damned grind the exam. is, I should say you were a lucky chap to be here, but there's little luck about getting through that."

"No; I wouldn't go through it again for a thousand pounds. However, the work is intensely interesting, the most absorbing it's possible to get."

"Is it?" Colonel Armstrong queried. "Now, I should have thought it would have been a bit stale; a lot of routine, red-tape, and all that kind of thing; but I suppose just now Servia is waking things up a little."

"And Austria," Geoffrey added dryly.

"Well, the two of them. Rather good chaps, though, the Austrians. Capital sportsmen; I met several of them when I was in Germany last month."

"Did you have a good time?"

"First-rate. Everyone was awfully kind and hospitable. I confess I've always had a good honest hatred of the Germans, but these people at Wildenfels and Grünberg quite upset all my theories about them."

"You must remember that the Grünberg and Wildenfels people and their set are cosmopolitans; they are the racing, travelling lot, and half of them have English or American wives. No one who lives in their set knows Germany, or the Germans. To do that you must go and live in a Prussian *pension* in a Prussian town."

"I suppose that's true. You did that, didn't you, when you were working for your exam.?"

"Yes, for my sins—and I learnt there that Prussia not only rules Germany, but believes she has a Heaven-sent mission to rule the world."

George Armstrong laughed.

"Well, want will be her master," he said cheerfully as he filled his tumbler with iced cup.

"Yes," Geoffrey answered thoughtfully, "but she'll have a try."

"So we have said for years, and so I have said myself any amount of times; but over there they say it's all rubbish, that all the mischief is made by the newspapers, and Germany only wants peace so that she can develop her commerce. They said their relations with us had never been so good."

"That is so," Geoffrey said briefly.

"Well, I am glad of it, for I've developed a sort of liking for them; they were so uncommonly kind and hospitable to me, and—well, I suppose I saw them under circumstances that would make one like almost anything—the fact is, Leigh, I'm engaged."

"My dear old chap, you don't say so! I congratulate you. Who is the girl?"

Colonel Armstrong hesitated.

"Well, she isn't exactly a girl," he said slowly. "She——"

"She's not a German, is she?" Geoffrey interrupted quickly.

"Oh dear, no! An American; but—well, the fact is she's a widow, and her first husband was a German."

"The devil he was!"

"Well, why shouldn't he be? He's dead, and that's all that matters to me."

"But a wife takes her husband's nationality."

"Does she? Well, then, she'll take mine."

"Yes, when she marries you. When is it to be?"

"Oh, some time in the winter. She wants to go to America first."

The attentive servant had just filled Geoffrey

Leigh's glass, and he emptied it before he answered. It was, as Colonel Armstrong had remarked, a very warm night.

"What's the good of that?" he asked, as he set the empty glass down on the table.

"Well, you see, she's an only child, and her mother had set her heart on it, and there were business matters to look into. She seemed to think, too, she'd rather marry from her own country than from Germany; but I must say I can't see why it should take such a devil of a time."

"Is she still in Germany?"

"Yes; stopping at Grünberg Castle."

"And when does she sail for America?"

"About October, I think."

Dessert had been placed on the table, and Geoffrey Leigh was peeling a peach slowly, with the care he invariably bestowed even upon the smallest details. He did not look up as he answered:

"I don't think I should wait if I were you."

"What do you mean?" Colonel Armstrong asked quickly.

"Just that."

"But why?—what on——"

"What on earth has it to do with me?" Geoffrey finished for him. "Nothing; except that we've been friends a good long time and—it seems to me waiting may mean a lot of bother."

"How?"

"Well, as you said just now, Servia has wakened things up a bit, and Austria has done

nothing to send them to sleep again; and with Russia behind Servia, things may become stirred up a good deal more. In that case England would be a more comfortable place—for your wife—than Germany."

"But, my dear chap, you don't think Germany would come in, even if Austria does march into Servia? Why, I met the German Ambassador here, at dinner the other night, and he said how delighted he was with the political situation. Things had never been smoother."

"That was at Lady Carstairs' party, wasn't it?"

"Yes; how did you know? You weren't there——"

"No; but she told me. I suppose you didn't happen to notice the Military Attaché's face while the Ambassador was talking? She did; and afterwards he admitted to her that he thought things looked very black."

"But, my dear chap, it would be preposterous to make the Serajevo murders a pretext for a European war."

"Quite; but I don't know that the pretext for the Franco-Prussian war was particularly convincing. Yet it worked all right—from the Prussian point of view."

"But you surely don't think that Germany——"

"I never think about Germany—if I can help it: I haven't your reasons for finding it an agreeable subject, you know; but if Austria goes to war, it's too near, and too closely allied with her, to be a comfortable residence for a woman who

has—her interests—over here. Get her to come over, Armstrong, at once;" and with an air of finality Geoffrey Leigh pushed back his chair, and stepping up on to the little platform in the window, seated himself upon its sill.

" Do you mean that ?"

Geoffrey nodded, and silence fell between them. George Armstrong was thinking.

" I'd better go over again and try to bring her back," he said at last.

" Don't go yourself," Geoffrey answered. " Why not write ? Don't, of course, repeat what I've said to you. They use a large discretion as to opening letters in Germany—but—well, plead your own cause; say you'll cut your throat if she doesn't come—or anything you please—but get her over at once."

" But why the devil can't I go for her ?"

" Well, I shouldn't, that's all."

Colonel Armstrong got up and looked steadily at his host as he answered.

" You mean—that all I was told in Germany, and what the Ambassador said the other night, was bunkum—dust in our eyes—and that the old idea was right and Germany's out for a fight ?"

" I mean nothing," Geoffrey answered slowly, " except that a man's own land is the best place for his wife."

As he spoke the telephone-bell rang sharply, and Geoffrey left the window to answer it.

Colonel Armstrong stepped up on to the little platform and took the place his host had vacated. In the cars and taxis whirling round the curve of

the Park were women and girls in ball-gowns and jewels, while men in evening dress, disdaining haste, sauntered along beneath the trees on their way from one party to another. The whirr of the wheels seemed like the *leit motif* of a society comedy, gay and full of life. It seemed impossible to think of war and death—and yet, what else did Geoffrey's words mean? Before he found an answer to this question, Geoffrey's voice broke in upon his thoughts.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said, "but they want me downstairs again. Don't go, though; there's an evening paper and cigars, and my servant will bring the whisky-and-soda directly; so look after yourself, and I'll get up again as soon as I can."

"Oh, that's all right," Armstrong answered, "but I thought you finished for the day at six o'clock?"

Geoffrey laughed.

"Well, you see, we haven't got a trade union, and if work comes in we do it, that's all—so I'll go and do mine——" And he went.

His guest remained seated on the window-sill. The blue of the sky had deepened into indigo, and the stars sent down silvery shafts to burnish the wireless installation at the Admiralty opposite. What news did it bring, he wondered? What were the tidings that had called Geoffrey back to work? What had made him say, "Don't go yourself"? He was a soldier, and —— Bah! what on earth was he thinking of? Why look beyond a man's words? It was true enough that Austria's mobilisation would put

Germany into a ferment, and Rosamund would be far better over here. It was senseless, as Geoffrey said, to wait. He turned away from the window and took up the evening paper: nothing alarming there. "Austria's demands" —well, of course she would demand a good deal, but no one ever expected to get all they asked for, and there would be a lot of shilly-shallying and give and take, and then "As you were." By the time the whisky-and-soda had come in, Colonel Armstrong had completely regained his equanimity, and had come to regard Geoffrey's suggestion as merely a fortunate device for bringing Rosamund von Steinberg over to England at once, instead of following her to America in the autumn.

The evening paper, however, was not absorbing, and the whisky-and-soda was soon finished. The clock on the mantelpiece chimed midnight —one o'clock—and still his host did not return. At one-thirty Colonel Armstrong decided to wait no longer, but as he turned the handle of the door to go out he found Geoffrey on the threshold.

"I had given you up," he said; "you don't get your rooms for nothing, I must say, if they keep you to the grindstone like this often."

"They don't—*often*——" Geoffrey answered.

Colonel Armstrong looked at him sharply.

"Then this means war?" he queried, yet as one who knew the answer to what he asked.

Geoffrey Leigh gave him none.

"Wait and see," he said. "Good-night."

BOOK I

GERMANY

CHAPTER I

ROSAMUND

"Blest but for some dark under-current woe
That seems to draw—but it shall not be so;
Let all be well, be well!"

ALFRED TENNYSON: *Maud.*

GRÜNBERG is one of those delightful German townlets in the midst of mountains, where the houses have been built amongst the trees with that respect for Nature which forbids the architect to let his chimneys thrust their heads through the swaying screen of foliage they spread 'twixt earth and Heaven.

All up the hill-side the houses climbed: cottages, farms, white-walled, red-roofed; a little church, schools, villas set about with gardens and orchards, and here and there, through the spreading forest that crowned the hill, one caught glimpses of the grey walls and turrets of the old castle, built in days when its safety depended on the stoutness of its walls and the steepness of the slopes that led to it. In Germany the July sun is strong and floods the world with an abundance of light and warmth, agreeable enough to those who look into it from the cool shadow of

the trees, but altogether unattractive to those who face and wrestle with it as they toil wearily uphill.

Rosamund von Steinberg, therefore, walked slowly as she returned from her daily visit to the post office. Certain foreign letters, by which she set much store, came into her hands three or four hours earlier in this way than if left in the postman's charge for delivery; and although Rosamund disliked getting hot, and more especially looking hot and feeling that she looked it, her liking for the letters outweighed all these dislikes. On this particular July afternoon, however, a little pucker showed between her eyebrows, and she walked even more slowly than the heat, and her fear of the ravages it might effect on her pretty, fair skin, seemed to warrant. Yet it was a very lover-like letter that she held half-opened in her hand—the letter, indeed, of a very impatient and insistent lover, and it was this very impatience which had made that little pucker of thought in her smooth skin.

As she reached a part of the road where the generous trees of a neighbouring orchard stretched their branches far out over the wall enclosing them, and made an awning beneath which wayfarers might shelter from sun or rain, Rosamund pulled her letter wholly out of its envelope and read every one of the closely written pages, which, if she did their bidding, would mean a sudden upheaval of the little world about her.

Baroness von Steinberg was an only child, and to the widowed mother, who had broken up

her home to come to her in her own widowhood, the sun rose and set behind the soft curls of Rosamund's fair hair. The realisation that her child would marry again, would leave her again, was a deep and abiding grief to the mother who had watched in miserable helplessness the disillusion of her child's first marriage; and although she believed that the man she had now chosen could be trusted to care for her truly and enduringly, the idea of parting with her was very bitter; and she had so little physical strength, so little hold on life, to which she seemed to cling only through her love for her daughter, her desire to be with her, that in the first days of the engagement Rosamund had felt it impossible to agree to her lover's wish for an early marriage, in face of her mother's plea for "just one more summer before my sunshine is taken away from me." It had been difficult to get Colonel Armstrong to see this, but at last she had prevailed, and he had agreed that she should go back to her old home in America and be married from there, as her mother so strongly desired. Her first marriage had taken place in Germany, and neither she nor her mother could endure the idea that anything in her second marriage should recall the first. Baron von Steinberg had been, according to German ideas and expectations, an excellent husband and father, but fidelity is not included in those expectations. In Germany the instinct of polygamy apparently finds ready acceptation, and adapts itself to the claims of home and family

in a way which in England would be deemed indecent, and in Latin countries intolerable. To the German mind, however, there seems to be nothing curious in an affection, lavish and apparently sincere, for wife and children coinciding with one or more (usually more) liaisons with other ladies. These temporary ties are, indeed, so lightly accepted and ignored in German society that, despite their notorious faithlessness, its men boldly claim to be the best husbands and fathers in Europe, because they are at pains to ensure material well-being for wife and children and to give them all outward marks of affection.

To Rosamund, however, material well-being meant nothing, since it had surrounded her from her cradle. She had married her handsome young Guardsman for love, or so she had believed, though later, with the knowledge born of sorrow, she had learnt that she had but been in love with love—a love that had proved very different from that of which she had dreamed, and which had faded almost before she had accustomed herself to its manifestations. One little child, a boy, had been born to her, but when he was barely a year old he had been suddenly stricken down by scarlet fever, and on the day of his funeral her husband had sickened of the same illness, and had died a fortnight later.

During the years which had elapsed since then, Rosamund von Steinberg and her mother, who had come to her at the first hint of her child's illness, had spent their time between

Italy and Germany, since even her mother's love for America, and her desire to return to her home there, had been powerless to persuade Rosamund to put the sea between her and the churchyard where her little child lay. Now at last she had said that she would go home, and that there her second marriage should take place; and George Armstrong, realising at last, out of his own love for Rosamund, how hard it must in truth be for the mother who adored her to give her up, had agreed, however unwillingly, that she should do this. Yet it now appeared that he repented. Why? As she read and reread the strongly worded sentences of his letter, the query grew more and more insistent in that subconsciousness of Rosamund's brain which checked and pierced each plea and argument. What was the motive force she felt in every word? His love for her? It was strong and ardent, that she knew; but he had agreed to wait until October, had thoroughly made up his mind to do so; of that she was convinced. What could have occurred since he left her, only ten days ago, to make him wish to go back upon the word he had given to her mother? "I will not steal your sunshine," he had said, "until she has made another summer for you." It was not like him to go back on anything he had said. He was absolutely reliable; she had always felt and known that, yet he was breaking his word in this. He admitted it.

"I want you to come *now*," he wrote, "now at once—to come here to England. I want it

more than I have ever wanted anything on earth. Won't you come? I know that I promised to follow you to your home in America and bring you back to mine, but I cannot wait. One cannot foresee the future. I hate to feel that the sea is between us. If you were only here, even if you would not marry me until the autumn, I could bear it because I could see you; but when I can't see you I imagine a thousand things happening: things coming between us, keeping me from going to you. It makes me wretched: absurdly nervous and uneasy, you would say; but there it is, and your coming is the only cure. *Come!* Tell your mother that if she will only bring you to me she will never regret it, and you shall make sunshine for her all the days of her life, as you will make it for mine."

The letter fluttered in the light wind as Rosamund's fingers slackened their hold upon the paper, and she stood still in the white roadway beneath the thick foliage of the overhanging orchard trees, her eyes still fixed upon the closely written sheets she held, though her brain was busy with her own thoughts, not with her lover's written words. There was something unwritten in this letter: something she felt and tried to follow, but which eluded her. What was it that he feared and feared for her? That it was for her she knew; but how she knew it she could not tell. The whole letter was inexplicable. She looked up, following the winding road as it climbed onward through the houses

and villas into the stillness of the woods about the castle. The little breath of a breeze from the mountains that floated downwards lightly stirred the leaves that made a screen above her head, so that they threw dancing shadows at her feet. Through the gate of an orchard heaps of red and yellow apples, gathered together in readiness for cider-making, glowed lusciously in the afternoon light; in the window of a farm-house on the other side of the road a cat slept in the sunshine; white butterflies flew from flower to flower in the gardens, sipping their full of honey, quivering with the ardent *joie de vivre* that makes a tremulous ecstasy of their brief lives. The world was full of light, warmth, prosperity, peace and plenty. What was it that her lover feared? What *could* it be? This unformed, unnamed thing that clutched her heart and showed the sunshine suddenly hardened to a blinding glare, making the way before her a steep, weary hill that she must climb alone.

Overhead the leaves rustled more loudly; the breeze in the mountains was strengthening and sending sudden ripples of air down the hill-side; a great green leaf fell plump upon George Armstrong's letter, and with a start Rosamund shook herself clear of the questions it had raised, and thrusting it into its envelope, put up her parasol with a determined snap, and started resolutely up the hill towards the castle.

CHAPTER II

THE COSMOPOLITANS

"Power is the only regulator of foreign policy."—GENERAL VON BERNHARDI, p. 177.

THE present owner of Grünberg, Friedrich Adolf von Rothenstein, was one of the wealthiest men in Germany, both in intellect and in income: indeed, he owed the latter greatly to the former, for although the works in which it had been earned had been initiated by his grandfather, it was Fritz Adolf who had given them their world-wide renown by the great chemical discovery that had revolutionised the entire method of the manufacture in which it was employed. The Rothenstein works were established in all the great cities of Europe, and also in New York; and the Rothenstein Laboratory was recognised as the finest in Germany. Distinguished savants came from all parts of the world to visit it, and most of them journeyed on a few miles farther to visit Herr von Rothenstein and his lovely Irish wife in their castle of Grünberg.

Antoinette von Rothenstein had been named after her great-grandmother, child of one of those noble French ladies who had been faithful to their Queen until the end. Her father was an Irish gentleman, whose length of pedigree and

leagues of land had kept him a poor man, since he belonged to the days when the only professions open to gentlemen were the underpaid. His Scots wife, who had fallen in love with him in a fashion which her heart showed her to be as thorough as her head told her it was foolish, had brought much method, if little money, into the Irish household, and it was under her insistent pressure that, when Antoinette was nine years old, Castle Fitzpatrick had been let and that Captain Fitzpatrick had, much against his will, been packed up and taken abroad by his wife and daughter, in order that the said daughter might receive the best available education at the least possible cost. Mrs. Fitzpatrick, like all Scots people, set a high value upon education, and she well understood the importance of what they call "a fine appearance," and realised that a thorough knowledge of foreign languages, which can be acquired at very small cost in cheap, unfashionable resorts, gives by far the best return for the money expended. A girl's future was, she felt, so speculative an investment that one should hedge as much as possible. "She may marry a Duke or a curate, and I don't want her to fail as a wife whichever it is, so she must learn to talk to Ambassadors and to cook, and the best place for both is France," Mrs. Fitzpatrick had said, with her usual decision.

To France, therefore, they went, and later, when the embryo Duchess-cook developed a striking talent for music, to Germany, where she

studied in the Conservatoire at Munich. There it was that Herr von Rothenstein saw her and fell in love with her on the spot—a very ordinary restaurant. He happened to know one of the ladies of the party in which Antoinette was included and, calling upon her the next day, he informed her of his desire—indeed, his determination—to marry the beautiful Irish girl, and entreated her kindly offices in order to arrange a meeting. The lady was somewhat surprised by the suddenness and volume of his passion for a girl so much younger than himself; but when he revealed to her the volume of his fortune she stood amazed. The modest manner in which Fritz Adolf had always lived with his widowed sister had given no inkling of his wealth to the world about him, and the lady felt that the introduction she had promised to a foreigner was almost treacherous to her country. The promise had, however, been given, and it was kept, the result being that the Irish bride was won and her husband's wealth showered upon her in a profusion which scandalised all carefu' Hausfraus.

To Herr von Rothenstein, however, the chatter of the Hausfraus in their kitchens mattered as little as that of sparrows on the house-tops. He adored his wife, and appreciated to the full the new world of society in which slowly, but surely, she made her way, taking him with her. In Germany social distinctions are not only sharply defined, but severe. Fritz Adolf's father had not belonged to the nobility, and it

was not for some years after his marriage that Fritz himself received the magic " von " which in that country opens so many closed doors; not in social things alone, but in the more serious matter of alliances for one's children.

Antoinette Fitzpatrick came of the old race of gentlefolk, who, born amongst their own kind, live and die amongst them, their position known, accepted by all; and she had been born with the genius of society. She sought no one, but charmed all who sought her; and as the years went on, through the bowl of plain wholesome milk, which had formed her social world in the early days of her wedded life, the cream rose until it covered the whole surface of the bowl, offering her the best society had to give. The education her mother had given her had borne good fruit, and Antoinette had become the centre of a really brilliant cosmopolitan society. Her son, her only child, though educated in a German school, had subsequently gone to Oxford, where he had obtained considerable success in the field of sports, if not in the Schools, and had become so enthusiastic a polo-player that immediately on his return to Germany he had established a polo club. It was through this that there had come to be a great Polo Week at Grünberg every summer, at which almost all European nationalities were represented, and it was for one of these weeks, in this July of 1914, that Rosamund von Steinberg and her mother had come to stay with the von Rothensteins in their castle on the hill-top, towards which she

climbed so slowly on this sultry afternoon, with George Armstrong's letter in her hand and the words of it echoing in her heart and brain.

• • • • •

She was warmly greeted as, crossing the big, English-looking hall, with its thick, soft carpets and huge armchairs and settees, she passed out into a wide veranda where Antoinette von Rothenstein, looking cool and fair as a sheltered lily in her dainty lingerie gown and shady hat, was pouring out countless cups of tea, assisted by various maidens looking but little younger, and certainly no fairer, than herself.

"Rosamund at last!" Antoinette exclaimed, holding her tea-pot in mid-air, and even giving it a little shake in lieu of waving her hand in greeting. "Come and sit down quickly or those greedy men will have eaten all the sandwiches."

"Never mind; I will give you some of my English plum-cake," Herr von Rothenstein put in soothingly, as he pointed to a round table on which stood one vast dish containing a gigantic cake, whose dark complexion and plum-strewn surface gave every outward sign of inward wealth.

Antoinette laughed.

"Fritz thinks there is nothing in the world so good as English plum-cake," she said. "Buzzard makes a special size for him."

"It's jolly good," Captain Burton, a stalwart Guardsman, remarked between two mouthfuls.

"Do have some," Herr von Rothenstein urged hospitably.

Rosamund, however, shook her head.

"No, thanks; I prefer sandwiches. Cake is too serious."

Herr von Rothenstein nodded.

"That is true. Between lunch and dinner it is not suitable. One should begin the day on it. When I am shooting stags in Hungary I eat it before I go out at four in the morning."

A chorus of protest arose from all the ladies.

"What? Plum-cake at 4 a.m.! Horrible!"

The men, however, rallied to their host's support.

"Not a bit of it," they avowed; "it's much the same as cold plum-pudding, and there's no better meal to take out hunting."

"That is true," Herr von Rothenstein agreed. "Hot or cold, your plum-pudding is excellent. English plum-pudding and English plum-cake have no rivals; but you cannot make sausages."

"God forbid!" Lord Guiseborough, a good-looking young fellow, murmured in Rosamund's ear; but Karl von Rothenstein, who had just come in and was balancing himself on the arm of his mother's chair, drowned the words as he repeated: "Sausages! Who speaks of sausages in my mother's presence? It's the one thing we quarrel over; I love them; she hates them! Logically she ought to give me her share as well as my own. I don't want *her* to eat them, but she wants me *not* to eat them."

"Horrid boy! You are as bad now as when you were three years old, when you were asked at a tea-party what you liked best to eat, and you said 'Liver sausages.'"

There was a general laugh, broken by Rosamund's plaintive tones.

"The things I love," she remarked aggrievedly, "are ham sandwiches, and though they have been mentioned several times, not one has been offered to me."

Instantly Herr von Rothenstein stretched out his hand and whipped a little plate, laden with sandwiches, from a cake-stand which Captain Burton was conveying to a pretty girl seated a little farther down the veranda.

"Oh, Fritz, I call that grab!" Rosamund said, as she helped herself plentifully and then returned the plate to the cake-stand, making a little *moue* of amusement at its astonished bearer.

"Well, isn't grab a man's duty?" Fritz said, with an air of conviction which turned the query into assertion. "Grab is the quality that makes the world move. To get on a man *must* grab: not altogether for himself, of course; he should give to others; to those weaker than himself perhaps—certainly to women."

"But other people's things!" Captain Burton, who had returned with the cake-stand, protested.

"As a general rule everything a man hasn't got himself *is* another person's thing," Fritz answered, "and the man has got to get it somehow if it's a thing he needs."

"And who is to judge his needs—the man himself?" Rosamund queried.

"Certainly; if he is not the man to get it, or can't keep it when he *has* got it, someone will take it from him."

"Then you hold that strength overrules all laws: that there is no right or wrong?"

"What *is* right and wrong?" Herr von Rothenstein questioned. "An ethical theory built up by the strong for the protection of the weak, *when it is to their interest that the weak should be protected.*"

"But how do you make that out?" Lord Guiseborough put in. "Women and children, for instance."

"Women are the State. They bear the children who are its citizens. Their well-being is therefore essential to the State."

"Is that why you take so much care of me, Fritz?" his wife queried mischievously.

As Herr von Rothenstein turned to her his whole face softened as it did for no one else on earth.

"You, *mein Engel?*" he said gently—"you are far more than woman. You are, as I have said, an Angel made to be worshipped, and above all laws."

Antoinette laughed contentedly.

"*Dieu merci!*" she said, and unfurling a large white parasol, she took her son by the arm and marched him off to see if the tennis-courts were yet in the shade.

Rosamund von Steinberg and Captain Burton, however, did not move. They were interested in their host's views.

"If by any possibility women became useless to the State—it is not possible, I know—but imagine it," Rosamund said tentatively—"would the State cease to protect them?"

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"Certainly; they would become mere toys, to be treasured or broken as their owners pleased."

Rosamund shuddered.

"Then those without beauty or charm, and those who, having had those things, have lost them, would be broken?"

Once more the resolute lines of Fritz von Rothenstein's face softened.

"There are some," he said gently, "to whom the old toys of their youth are ever the dearest;" and his eyes sought the distant flutter of a white gown on the tennis-lawn, the sheath of his life's romance.

Captain Burton, however, was of a practical turn of mind.

"It is obvious that women and children can never cease to be of importance to the State," he said conclusively; "but if protection, promised to the weak, is only to hold good so long as they are beneficial to the State, what value have the guarantees given to small countries, unable to defend themselves against their powerful neighbours?"

Herr von Rothenstein shrugged his shoulders slightly as he selected a cigar and lighted it.

"The guarantees given to a small State by its great neighbours have precisely the value that the preservation of that small State intact has for those neighbours," he answered.

"Then you hold that Governments are like Corporations and that, as they have neither a body to be kicked nor a soul to be saved, they can do what they damn-well like without bother-

ing about treaties, or agreements, or anything of the kind ?"

" Have you ever known a treaty worth the paper it was written on ?" Herr von Rothenstein asked, as he lazily puffed at his big cigar.

Captain Burton stared.

" Why—yes—I suppose so——" he said hesitatingly.

" I think not," his host answered quietly; " whenever it has been worth while to break treaties, they have been broken. You will find this, if you study history—but in England you do not study history."

Captain Burton laughed.

" I'm afraid we don't much," he admitted, " but surely we've kept our treaties. We pride ourselves on keeping our word, you know."

" Yes, I know. ' The Englishman's word is his bond !' It is a fine saying; but what about Denmark in '64 ?"

Dick Burton flushed slightly.

" That's a black page, I admit, but, thank God, we haven't many of them."

" No; your treaties have been carefully made, but I think you must admit that it has been by pursuing my policy of grab that England is what she is. Look at your Colonies !"

" Oh, well, but colonising is our job, you know," Dick urged.

Herr von Rothenstein smiled.

" You have had much practice," he said dryly.

Captain Burton rose.

" I think I'll go and have a game of tennis

before dinner," he said and strolled off towards the courts on the other side of the house. As he disappeared down the steps of the veranda Rosamund turned to Fritz von Rothenstein and said quickly: " Do you mean, Fritz, that you believe England's motto to be ' Grab ' as much as Germany's ?"

Her host removed his cigar deliberately from his lips before he answered.

" Certainly it is," he said slowly. " From Raleigh to Rhodes, they have been the most gigantic grabbers the world has seen."

" But—it doesn't seem like grabbing," Rosamund urged. " There has always been some strong reason for annexing whatever territory they have taken, and the people have always settled down to work so well with them."

" Yes; they are fine colonists. Practice has made them so, as I told Captain Burton, but they have got their practice by grab."

" Well, then, it's very well done," Rosamund retorted. " Not like Austria's grab at Bosnia-Herzegovina. I never could make out why Russia did not fight over that."

" Russia was not ready," Herr von Rothenstein said decisively.

" Then why did she make such a fuss ?"

" Because England egged her on to do it. England's policy has always been to embroil other nations in war while she looks on, seeing them grow gradually weaker while she gets steadily stronger. England has always been afraid of Russia in India, and it would have

suited her well to see her weakened by a war with Austria, which would have weakened Austria also and have detracted from her value as Germany's ally. In the Bosnia-Herzegovina affair she backed Russia until Germany stepped in and said she would stand by Austria to her last man, and then *la perfide Albion* backed out, as she always has done and always will do."

"I beg your pardon," said a quiet voice behind them, "I happen to know that that is a mistake. Russia was told that, although the question did not directly concern us, we should give them strong diplomatic support, as they were indubitably in the right; but diplomatic support only. It was Russia who decided to drop the question because, as you say, she was not ready."

Herr von Rothenstein turned genially towards the speaker.

"Ah, is that you, General Hallam? I did not know you were there, or I should not have aired my stupid civilian theories," he said laughing.

"Your theories are never stupid—very much the reverse," General Hallam answered gravely; "but on this question you were misinformed, and as you so seldom are that, I ventured to interrupt."

"I am so glad you did," his host said cordially. "You have every right to correct me for you were, I know, at the War Office at the time."

General Hallam looked at him curiously. This was his first visit to Grünberg and he had never mentioned his War Office appointment to

his host. He had, however, noticed that, as he had just remarked, he was exceptionally well-informed, even upon subjects which could, it seemed, have no special interest for him.

"Of course," Herr von Rothenstein continued, "all you War Office people always think you are going to war; but you won't, you know. England's soul is in commerce, and her rôle is to watch other nations fight and impoverish each other while she gets richer and richer."

The genial laugh with which he ended his sentence robbed the words of sting, and General Hallam accepted them genially.

"Yes; we are a nation of shopkeepers," he answered, "but, like shopkeepers, we have iron safes to guard our treasures."

"Your ironclads? It is well to be an island!"

"It is," General Hallam readily agreed as, taking an English newspaper from a chair beside him, he stepped back through the window leading from the veranda into the smoking-room.

Rosamund's eyes followed him.

"Yes; he is a clever fellow," Fritz von Rothenstein said, answering her unspoken thought, "but he does not understand his countrymen. None of these soldiers do."

"Then you think England will never fight?"

"England fight! She will never be ready. *England ist ein schones liebes Land, und sein Volk ist lieb und schön: aber voraussehen, sich bereit halten können sie nicht.*"*

* "England is a beautiful and dear country, and her people are dear and beautiful, but look ahead, stand ready, they can't."

CHAPTER III

A STATESWOMAN

"The State can exercise influence over the people by means of three instruments of the greatest power: the School, the Press, and the Army."—GENERAL VON BERNHARDI: *England as Germany's Vassal.*

WHEN Rosamund von Steinberg came down into the hall dressed for dinner that evening she found it already half full of people. Herr von Rothenstein had so enlarged the old castle—adding towers and galleries with such supreme skill that it was hard to say where the Middle Ages ended and the modern began—that a very large number of guests could be accommodated, and during the annual Polo Week every room was occupied. To-night, too, friends in the neighbourhood—a term that motors have stretched by many miles—had brought their house-parties to dine and dance afterwards.

At the bend of the staircase, a few steps above the hall, Rosamund paused and looked down into the gay, chattering groups below. Antoinette was standing by the grand piano, surrounded by officers in uniform and gaily dressed ladies, the fair dignity of her beauty enhanced by the simplicity of her perfectly cut white satin gown. As Rosamund watched her, she heard a step upon the staircase and, turning, saw General Hallam standing close behind her

looking, as she had looked, at Antoinette von Rothenstein.

"What on earth made her marry him?" he asked abruptly.

Rosamund started.

"What made her marry Fritz? Why, he is the best and most generous of husbands, and he worships her."

"Who wouldn't?" General Hallam said, so low that Rosamund scarcely caught the words—"but she should have married an Englishman."

Baroness von Steinberg laughed.

"How insular you are!" she said lightly.

"Or patriotic?" he suggested.

"In Englishmen it is the same thing, isn't it?" Rosamund said mischievously; "and anyhow, I prefer cosmopolitanism to patriotism. It's so much more civilised."

"Possibly: a nation's greatest qualities are, like her lowest, drawn direct from Nature, and Nature is sometimes too big for civilisation."

"Like the mountains of Thibet, where no civilised beings can live," Rosamund suggested. "But we must go down if we don't want to prove ourselves uncivilised;" and she passed quickly down the few remaining stairs.

She was at once absorbed into one of the many groups which were constantly forming and re-forming as fresh friends arrived and new introductions were made. In Germany these introductions are a serious business, since it is the rule that every man should be presented to any ladies whom he does not know.

General Hallam followed her slowly, but scarcely had he reached the hall than his host hurried up to him, saying, "Will you please keep near me, General Hallam? I am particularly anxious to present you to the Archduke when he arrives."

General Hallam bowed and obediently followed Herr von Rothenstein towards the entrance, congratulating himself that by so doing countless introductions were at least deferred.

The Archduke did not keep them waiting, and a few moments later, with Antoinette upon his arm, he led the way into the big stone banqueting-hall, whose windows were framed in wonderful carvings and where a marvellous set of Gobelins tapestry gave just the warmth and colour needed to the still greyness of the stone.

General Hallam had been told off to Frau von Witting, a tall, good-looking, slenderly built Englishwoman, whose husband held an important civilian post, and who was designated for high Ministerial position. Officially and privately, she made him an admirable wife, but socially, in the stratum occupied by provincial housewives, it was considered that she possessed all an Englishwoman's faults in full measure, professing interest in things out of woman's sphere, and seeking, and also, it must unfortunately be admitted, finding, success in exalted social spheres far above that official position which was hers.

She had become a *persona grata* to the Emperor and Empress, and the former frequently

lunched and dined at her husband's country-house, where Frau von Witting spent far more time than was considered suitable by those who regarded their own entertainment at Herr von Witting's official residence as the chief, if not the whole, duty of the woman he had chosen for his wife.

"How is England?" Hilda von Witting asked, as they walked down the long, wide gallery leading to the banqueting-hall.

"Straining at gnats and swallowing camels as usual," General Hallam answered dryly; and Frau von Witting laughed, a pleased, appreciative laugh which made him turn to glance at the dark eyes looking up at him. He had not as yet paid much attention to her; he knew that she was English by birth, German by marriage, and, as he had said to Rosamund von Steinberg, he regarded such barter of one's birthright with aversion. But this woman, with her well-defined features and broad brow, framed in thick waves of red-brown hair, did not look as if she had sold herself.

"That is a real breath from home," she said. "I believe the chief secret of England's well-being lies in her utter inability to say a good word for herself."

"Well, you must admit that we have been making pretty good fools of ourselves lately."

"Of course I admit it! I'm English-born and talking to an Englishman; but I am German-bred, and if I were talking to a German I should admit nothing of the sort."

"But why not? They know it quite as well as we do."

"Much better; and it is just because of this that Germany will never understand England."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Germany accepts every word of criticism and abuse which in England is levelled against our Government, our Army and our Navy, not only as statements of fact, but as unwilling admissions of the least possible fraction of a terrible truth."

General Hallam laughed.

"They must certainly think us in a bad way," he said.

"They do. You see, in Germany no defect in any official thing, or person, is ever admitted unless it becomes so glaringly conspicuous that no power, however great, can conceal it. Then *some* admission, the slightest possible, is made, with an assurance that the matter had been rectified before it was mentioned."

"And the public is satisfied?"

"There is no public, as we understand the word in England. The German people are a nation of patriots. They believe in God and country, or rather that God is *in* their country, and *for* their country. They believe in that country and in 'Gott mit uns.' They accept what they are told, and they are told what it is agreeable to the Government that they should know."

"But they get outside news, surely?"

"Very little unedited; and foreign-sent news

is usually regarded as false unless confirmed by home-made news."

"The Government certainly have a wonderful hold upon the people."

"Yes; here the family is the State. Every child comes under Government supervision. When my girl was twelve and I got a new governess for her, she had to produce all her diplomas, etc., for official inspection and approbation in order to hold the post."

"By Jove! that seems rather a strong measure."

"Yes; but I rather think they are right from their point of view. They want a people trained to their hand. They make sure, therefore, that the teachers of that people are trained as they desire."

"I see; these instructors teach the people obedience and patriotism."

"Yes; and much more. Every German, male and female, is taught from babyhood that the Fatherland is 'über alles,' and they are organised, consciously or unconsciously, all in their different spheres, to aid in her advancement and development: the men by war and work; the women by work also, in making homes for men —German women are taught *how to make homes*. They are trained to cook and sew and clean, and at twelve years old a girl-child begins to sew sheets and tablecloths in the school for the husband and home that duty bids her find and furnish."

"And what does the husband do?"

"Well, he marries her: takes his portmanteau

to the house *she* has furnished, and keeps her. A German woman rarely goes out to work after her marriage; home, husband and children are her sphere, and if she does her duty, as she is expected to do it, in this line, she has little time for anything else. You see everything is organised in Germany, even domestic life."

"And a jolly good thing too! When I was with the Japanese army during the war with Russia, what impressed me most was the marvellous way in which patriotism permeated the whole people, down to quite little kiddies, and I found it was one of the first things they taught in the schools."

"Yes; and so it is here. Nothing is forgotten. The organisation of everything is, if possible, too perfect; it tends to turn men into mechanism."

"There are some men I should prefer as mechanism," General Hallam pregnantly remarked, "and I wish we had some of your organising powers. England lives in the present; she will never prepare for possibilities—rarely for probabilities."

"That is true," Frau von Witting agreed; "and Germany lives in the past and in the future."

General Hallam glanced at her quickly. She was observant, this compatriot of his, and had understood what she had seen.

"Yes," he said; "she meditates proudly on her victories, won for her by Frederick the Great and his successors, and she dreams gloriously of victories to come."

"Yes," Hilda answered gravely; "they meditate and dream."

"And you think the dreams will come true?"

"I cannot tell; but they work always towards their dreams and, should they become reality, they will be awake and ready. There is, as you know, a very strong war-party in Germany, and how long the Emperor will be able to hold them back I cannot tell."

"You think the Emperor wishes to hold them back?"

"I know he does. During the crisis at the beginning of last year, my husband and I lunched at Potsdam at the moment when the situation was most acute. An Ambassador to one of the Great Powers was there, and the Emperor said, '*I will not have War*'—and there was no war."

"No—but—it was a near thing."

"Yes; I think no one who has not studied the speeches in the Reichstag quite realises how near: and next time, if it is nearer still, the Emperor may not be able to stop it. The German war organisation is a wonderful machine. It works almost automatically, and when that machine is standing at the top of a steep hill the least little shove might set it going."*

"And you think there are many who would gladly give that gentle shove if it were possible?"

"I do. It is not realised in England that the whole system of government in Germany, the

* "L'Europe hypnotisée par d'autres visions—peut-être abusée par le pacifisme trompeur du Kaiser—ne prêta pas aux discussions du Reichstag l'attention inquiète quelles méritaient."—BARON BEYENS: *L'Allemagne avant la Guerre.*

monarchy, the aristocracy, the military caste, exist only in virtue of this all-compelling machine. The cleavage between classes here is incomprehensible in England. There our younger sons have intermarried freely with the bourgeoisie. The line of division there comes far lower down in the social scale. In England shopkeepers' interests are allied with landlords'. Here the land-owning classes cling to militarism because it keeps the 'little people,' as they call their inferiors, subservient. The burgher class are disposed to regard the increase of expenditure on armaments with apprehension. The Socialists are gaining power. There may come a time when this all-devouring monster of militarism must justify its existence. Only war can do that."

There was a moment's pause, then General Hallam said, smiling:

"At least, Herr von Rothenstein is good enough to exclude England from any future war. I found him telling Baroness von Steinberg, after tea to-day, that England would never fight; that her policy had always been to egg other nations on to war with each other while she stood aside, watching them grow weaker and weaker, waiting to capture their commerce when they got weak enough!"

"Yes, that is the German view of England," Hilda von Witting answered quietly.

"Do you mean to say that it is the view generally accepted by Government and people?"

"Certainly; Herr von Rothenstein, indeed,

seems to have presented the case with unusual urbanity; but, of course, he is not at all anti-English. He adores his wife, and he finds her countrywomen well dressed, intelligent and charming; and her countrymen good fellows and first-rate sportsmen."

"And that is all," General Hallam commented, a little bitterly.

"Naturally. What else would you have a German see in an Englishman? His newspapers and his talk are filled with sport, *sport*, SPORT! It is the Englishman's sphere."

"Which Germany gladly leaves to him," General Hallam added.

"Yes; the sporting instincts of a German are superficial: grafted on, not ingrained. They have, of course, the primitive love of killing, but they rarely reach the real spirit and science of sport. I wish you could have seen the face of the English cavalry officer whom Karl von Rothenstein brought to coach his polo team for him, when one of them yelled out 'My God, my God! you're hurting my leg!' when he tried to ride him off the ball."

General Hallam laughed.

"I can imagine it," he said.

"Germans hate waste, in pain and discomfort as in anything else. Sport isn't worth it in their eyes, but they have always been doggedly courageous when it comes to fighting."

"Yes; then, as you say, it's worth while. They think England fritters away her energies and is never serious. That is true in a measure,

but wasn't it good Queen Bess who said that it was 'England's simple mirth which keepeth high courage alive,' that gave her strength to conquer her enemies? I think I am rather glad the Germans despise us."

"Why?" Hilda von Witting queried quickly, and her eyes sought his eagerly. General Hallam, however, was intent on the truffles *au gratin* on his plate.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered carelessly. "Just a comfortable sort of feeling, that's all."

CHAPTER IV

MAMMA

"All night had the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon:
All night had the casement jessamine stirr'd
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird
And a hush with the setting moon."

TENNYSON: *Maud.*

MRS. CROSLAND, Rosamund von Steinberg's mother, was not at all pleased with George Armstrong's letter. It seemed to her a breach of faith and shook her trust in him. How could she be happy in giving her daughter to a man liable to make her views of him wobble in this fashion? Mrs. Crosland had an orderly mind, and she liked all the persons and events in her life to be properly fixed into suitable frames upon the sheltering walls of her existence. When, therefore, a wire stretched, or a nail gave way, it annoyed her greatly.

"I do not feel, Rosamund, that it would be right for you to do this thing, since he is so distinctly wrong to ask it," she said decidedly. "He gave me a solemn undertaking on the subject, to which he is bound to adhere. I regard it as a test of his character. If he fails in this he would fail in all things, and without trust love is impossible and life intolerable."

Rosamund was silent. She felt guiltily conscious that George's letter had in no way diminished her love for him; neither had the prospect of life with him ceased to be alluring. She judged it wiser, however, not to mention these things. Her first marriage had been made in defiance of her mother's judgment and wishes. She had suffered for her wilfulness and remembered it; her mother had seen this suffering and remembered, not only what her child had endured, but what she herself had endured in seeing it. If, therefore, she distrusted men and despised Rosamund's judgment in husbands, she was well within her rights, as her daughter ungrudgingly admitted.

"I can't understand it," she said; "he had so absolutely accepted the delay. Everything was arranged. It's not like him to go back on it all."

"Not like him as we have hitherto known him," Mrs. Crosland answered; "but lovers are like the chemist's bottle upon which your namesake, Miss Edgeworth's Rosamund, squandered her entire capital. They are all right until you take the stopper out and want to make use of the contents. Husbands are just the empty bottles."

"Oh, mother, not all husbands!" her daughter expostulated.

"My dear," Mrs. Crosland answered firmly, for despite the frailty of her frame her spirit was indomitable, "men are different, but husbands are all alike."

Rosamund laughed.

" Well, he is not my husband yet, so I still see him in rainbow colours," she said gaily.

" Then you are very foolish," her mother returned severely; " affection without approval cannot properly exist."

" Oh, mother, when I was little, at my very naughtiest you always loved me, though you did disapprove, and I think it was just the love that made the disapproval hard to bear."

Her mother put her arm about the slender form on the low chair beside her couch.

" I am afraid, my dear one, that no disapproval would ever kill my love for you," she said softly; " but then that is mother's love, and the other is only man's."

Rosamund laughed.

" The Old Testament tells us that the love of man may pass the love of woman," she retorted; but Mrs. Crosland was not to be silenced by antique quotations.

" The authors of the Old Testament were exclusively men," she said, " and therefore knew nothing about it. Men never understand women; but some women understand men, and those women rule them. I hope that you will prove yourself one of these."

" Well, I'm not going to have any man to rule yet, am I ?" Rosamund answered, somewhat ruefully.

Mrs. Crosland sat bolt upright on her cushions, and a bright crimson flush suddenly stained her pale cheeks.

"You can have one at once if you choose," she said quickly. "I hold neither you nor Colonel Armstrong to your promise, but a man who cannot keep his word before marriage will break his oath afterwards."

"But, mother dear," Rosamund said hesitatingly, "I do not somehow feel that he wants to break his word. It seems to me, somehow, as if something outside himself were forcing him to do it—driving him along against his will."

Mrs. Crosland smiled and laid a caressing hand on her daughter's soft hair.

"It is probably just his longing for you, my dear," she said gently; but Rosamund shook her head.

"No; it's not that, it's something different: something big. I don't know what it is. I have thought and thought, and find nothing, but it's *there* somewhere." She pressed both hands against her eyes, shutting out the light. "I feel it at the back of my brain, but I can't see it. It's all shapeless, dark."

"It is your own image, darling: that is why you can't see it; but it is the inspiration of that letter."

"I—wonder——" Rosamund said. "But if it were—if he wants so much to see me, he could come back here again. His War Office business must be finished now."

"Don't count on that," Mrs. Crosland said dryly. "Remember, it's the slowest-moving machine in the most indolent country in the whole of this most dilatory Continent. Still,

you might suggest his coming back here. Antoinette and Fritz will be charmed to have him. They are all hospitality, and they both like him."

"I'll send a telegram," Rosamund said; and springing quickly to her feet, she went over to the writing-table and hastily scribbled a few lines on one of the forms in a leather case that lay open beside the blotting-book.

Mrs. Crosland smiled.

"You had far better send him to the right-about."

Rosamund was, however, already counting out the money for her telegram.

"I don't think he would go," she said.

* * * * *

This conversation had taken place after the departure of the dance and dinner guests in the early hours of the morning, and when Rosamund reached her room and, drawing back the curtains, threw her window wide open, the faint, soft light that heralds the dawn was already stealing through the shimmering grey which is all that summer nights know of darkness. In front of her lay the terraces, which under Antoinette's direction, had been cut out of the hill that stretched downwards to smooth lawns and a rosery beyond, all robbed from the great forest which stretched, apparently limitless, behind them. Absolute stillness reigned, not a leaf stirred; it seemed that the world stood still and silent waiting for the sun. Yet, in the vastness of this still silence, Rosamund found no peace.

It seemed instinct with waiting, listening, as though the earth waited, listened, as something within her waited, listened, for a coming sound. Suddenly, with a little brusque shake of her shoulders, she turned back into her room. How absurdly fanciful she was to-night! George's letter, with its urgent desire to overthrow all the plans she had deemed so firmly settled, and her mother's views as to his own instability, had made her little world turn too quickly for her, so that all seemed swaying, insecure. Yet nothing had really changed. George would surely come in answer to her telegram. There could be nothing to keep him much longer in London. The leave granted to him on his return from India, on promotion to the Home battalion of his regiment, would not be up for some time still, and the appointment as to which he had been summoned to London would not be vacant before the autumn. There could be nothing to keep him, nothing. How he would laugh at her foolishness! She was certainly not fit to be a soldier's wife if such fancies possessed her. Yet she wished the A.D.C. of the Austrian Archduke, who had taken her in to dinner, had not talked so much of war. He had been very strong upon the folly of diplomatic conversations and the iniquity of Servia. "Austria should simply settle the matter herself," he had said, "and let the rest of the world say all they want to say afterwards, when it won't matter."

She recalled her diffident protest, "But that

might lead to a European war," and his prompt rejoinder: " Anything might lead to a European war; but Austria would have got in her first round before anyone else could move."

Would Austria fight? And what if she did? Need that draw Germany in? And even if it did, what would it matter to her, since she had long ago severed all connection with the country save in name, and soon that last link would be gone also, for she would bear an English name, and her home would be, where her heart already was, in England. Even if war came, it could not affect England. She recalled Fritz von Rothenstein's words: " When it comes to war *la perfide Albion* has always backed out and she always will. England will never fight. She will never be ready." Was he right, though? Was the country which seemed already half her own in truth perfidious? The quiet tones of General Hallam's voice seemed to answer her, as the reply given to their host rang again in her ears: " On this question you have been misinformed." Yet, when he had gone back into the house, Herr von Rothenstein had said again: " England will never fight. She will never be ready. She cannot look ahead." And why in Heaven's name should she fight over this Servian business? To Rosamund's practical American mind the idea appeared preposterous. Yet, somehow, she could not shake off the uneasy impression raised by the words and manner of the Austrian A.D.C., and by six words she had heard General Hallam say to an English

General who had been brought over to dine at Grünberg.

"Did you know anything of the murdered Archduke?" the stranger had queried.

"He was the Kaiser's greatest friend," General Hallam had answered. Yes; she knew that. And suddenly before her rose the vision of a smiling summer sea; waves dancing in the sunshine; white-winged yachts, their sails full-spread, speeding before the wind: a vision that had come to her when her cousin Colonel Crosland had told her of the day when, racing with the Kaiser at Kiel, he had seen an officer suddenly cross the deck to where, watching the race eagerly, the Kaiser stood, his glasses fixed intently on the yachts, every line of his mobile face alive with interest and enthusiasm. Saluting, the officer had handed him a telegram; the Kaiser had thrust it inside his coat, his eyes still fixed upon the race, his mind concentrated upon it wholly. Little enough had Colonel Crosland, standing a few yards behind the Emperor, closely following the white sails spreading, rising, then dipping again seawards like water-fowls, recked then of the flimsy sheet of paper and the written words thereon.

It was not until later, when the race was over, and something had recalled the message to the Kaiser's memory, that the look on his face as he read it printed the incident for ever upon Colonel Crosland's mind, so that his description of the scene to Rosamund had shown it vivid as he himself had seen it. For an instant the Emperor

had stood still as stone, then his face worked convulsively, and muttering " My twenty years of work to begin all over again,"* he had turned abruptly and, beckoning peremptorily to his Senior Naval *Aide-de-Camp*, he had hurried down into the cabin below. . . . Sharply, decisively, the door had closed behind them. The light and sunshine, the dancing seas and billowing sails, were shut out. That which had been was shut away. Down there in the little cabin, the flimsy paper in the Kaiser's hand had brought him to grips with the future. It told of the Serajevo murders.

* *Germany before the War*, Baron Beyens.

CHAPTER V

SAMMY AND KARL

"'. . . I ride for my country,'
Quoth Valentine Baker."

GEORGE LAWRENCE.

THE following morning Karl von Rothenstein took General Hallam round the stables; he was not a polo-player and had not arrived with the other guests, but had come on from Berlin, where he had been staying with an old German General whom he had known for many years.

The Rothenstein stables were well worth seeing. They were under the charge of an Irish coachman who had come from Antoinette's home in Monaghan. Captain Fitzpatrick had sent him out to Grünberg as a stable-lad before Karl was born, and it was he who had taught the little child to ride, imparting to him that lissom elasticity which makes an Irishman one with his horse in every motion, instead of forcing his horse into oneness with his own straight legs, stiff back and iron hands, as Prussians do.

Sammy the family still called him, although to his stable-men he was Herr Murphy, and a very " Geehrter Herr " indeed. He was an old man now, but he allowed no one else to drive " my little lady," as he always called Antoinette, when she went out in her victoria with the superb

Hungarian bay horses with black points which her husband had given her. General Hallam won the old man's heart by his appreciation of the magnificently matched pair.

"It's a pleasure to take a gentleman like you round, sir," he said cordially. "What these German officers look at in a horse are his hind-quarters; they want to know what weight he can carry. That's all a horse is to them—a beast of burden."

"Sammy hasn't much opinion of us, you see," Karl von Rothenstein said, as he laid his hand affectionately on the old man's shoulder.

Sammy turned upon him instantly.

"Us, indeed, Masther Charlie! You're no German, but as true an Irishman as ever rode a horse or kissed a girl."

"Can't Germans even do that?" General Hallam asked, laughing.

Sammy shook his head.

"Not like an Irishman, sir! Everything's wrong side out over here. You're bound to take the wrong side of the road or get run over. A German even goes courting on the wrong side."

"How on earth does he manage that?" General Hallam asked.

"Why instead of catching hold of his girl's waist straightforwardly with his right arm, as an Irishman, or even an Englishman, would do, he just sneaks his left arm round her, back-handed like."

Karl von Rothenstein laughed.

"That's to have his sword arm free, Sammy."

"Sword arm indade, sir! Swords are ill weapons for courting. When an Irish lad wants to knock a man down, a good stout blackthorn, that will tuck in aisy under his left arm while his right arm is round his girl, is good enough for him—but sure, then there'd be an Irishman's elbow behind it."

"More power to it!" General Hallam said cordially.

Sammy looked at him questioningly, but the glance that met his showed doubts of the speaker's sincerity to be an insult.

"Thank you, sir; and you're right, there are worse things than an Irishman's elbow in a tight corner."

"I know that. I've been in one with them." Sammy's eyes kindled.

"Indade, sir; and where might that be?"

"In South Africa."

"Ah, they did well then, and they'll do well again. England may talk her fill, call us disloyal and all the rest of it; but when has an Irishman evér failed her in a good stand-up fight?"

"Never."

Karl looked from the one to the other in surprise.

"But what about the Ulster business?" he asked.

"Husband and wife quarrelling, Masther Charlie, just to pass the time; but let another man step in, the two of them will turn on him: the husband 'll pommel him to a jelly and the

wife will scratch his eyes out. It's ill meddling between them as is joined together for better, for worse. They may want to be rid of each other right badly, but it's an ill job to help them to it. Don't you try it, Masther Charlie."

"Not I," Karl said, laughing; "I'm all for a man fighting for his own hand."

"Hallo, Karl, where's the pony you said I could have this afternoon?" a voice called from the stable entrance.

Karl wheeled round upon his heel to meet Captain Burton and a young Austrian Count, who were standing just within the gateway.

"He's a fine horseman, Murphy," General Hallam remarked as he watched the young fellow stride across the yard. "As you say, one would never take him for a German."

"And he shouldn't have been one, neither," Sammy answered warmly. "The Captain should never have given in to that hard-headed Scots wife of his and let her bring him and my little lady, the darlin', away from ould Ireland and from my old mother, who nursed her from the day she was born."

"Then you don't like being here?" General Hallam queried, with a glance at the admirably appointed stables.

"Oh, the place is well enough," Sammy admitted, his eyes following General Hallam's and passing on to his own comfortable house in the background, its windows gay with rose-coloured geraniums. "It's the people that's wrong: they're Germans."

The disgust in his tones made General Hallam smile.

"Well, at any rate Herr von Rothenstein must be a good master," he said, "or you would have gone back to Ireland long ago."

"Oh, he's well enough, but I don't stay for him. It's my little lady and Masther Charlie I couldn't leave. He's a white-headed boy."

"A what?" General Hallam queried.

"A white-headed boy, where all the others are black! Shure, and he is; and he has a way with him: the girls are all mad after him, and myself, I couldn't leave him for the best master in Ireland. He's a real gentleman is Masther Charlie, though his father is only a half-sir."

General Hallam laughed.

"I never heard of a half-sir before," he said.

"Didn't ye, now? Yet ye have them in England just the same as in Ireland. There's gentlemen there and common men, and half-sirs betwixt and between."

"That there certainly are," General Hallam agreed emphatically, as Karl von Rothenstein strolled back to them, Captain Burton and the young Austrian guardsman having gone off to the polo-ground.

"Still running down my country, Sammy?" he asked good-humouredly.

"Faith, and to hear ye calling a land where there's neither foxes nor hounds, nor men who could ride hard enough to follow them if there were, your own country, when there's divil a man in Ireland can ride a straighter line than

yerself, is reason enough for an Irishman to wish it were under the sea and yourself floating on the top of it away to Ireland."

"It would take a good big sea to drown Germany, Sammy," Karl retorted and, turning to General Hallam, he proposed that they should go on to look at some foals in the paddock. As they left the yard, General Hallam looked back and saw the old coachman still standing where they had left him at the stable door, his eyes, full of admiring affection, following Karl's every movement.

"Sammy's an amusing old character," said General Hallam, "and evidently devoted to you, body and soul."

"Yes, dear old chap! It's a shame to rag him as I do, but I can't resist the sure rise any mention of my nationality gives him."

General Hallam looked at him curiously.

"I have sometimes wondered what you really feel yourself," he said. "You speak like an Englishman, look like one, if I may say so, and you undoubtedly ride and shoot like one."

"Yes, and I always dream and habitually swear in English," Karl answered with a laugh. "I'm cosmopolitan; we all are. My mother is as much German now as she is English, or Irish, or French. She was educated in France, you know. And my father, though he looks like a German, is thoroughly cosmopolitan in all his tastes and ideas."

"Is he?" General Hallam queried, somewhat dubiously.

"Oh yes; when you know him really well you'll see that. My mother and I have cosmopolitan outsides; my father hasn't; but his ideas, his knowledge of men and countries, and his judgments of them, are wider than ours. He has a world-knowledge, but we have only some knowledge of the world."

"Well, the second is useful enough, but the former is invaluable. It is the real cosmopolitanism, the true civilisation; and it is rare."

Karl nodded.

"It is; but you will find lots of my sort over here. So many of us go to Oxford and Cambridge now, and an international education wipes out barriers sooner than anything."

"I suppose it does," General Hallam answered, but there was little conviction in his tone.

"Of course, my mother's being Irish makes a good bit of difference," Karl went on. "I'm very like her in most of my tastes, you know."

"And in your looks. Yet you feel Germany to be your country?" General Hallam asked.

"It is my home," Karl answered, with sudden seriousness. "I love England and Ireland, and I think I have even more friends over there than here but, of course—if anything happened—I should be German."

General Hallam glanced at him sharply.

"And your mother?" he said quickly.

The young face changed suddenly. A question, an anxiety, sent a sudden shadow across the mobile features; he hesitated.

"I cannot tell," he said at last. "She loves

Germany. Her one wish is to live and die here, and this place, of course, will be hers for life. Oh yes," he answered quickly, in response to General Hallam's look of surprise. "How could it be otherwise? She has made it. She and my father have worked at it, wall by wall and stone by stone almost, leaving the wonderful old structure as the outer casing of the home they wanted; the home they built up bit by bit, as swallows build their nests in the eaves of an old house."

"And you?" General Hallam asked. "Shall you, too, build your own nest?"

Karl laughed.

"Some day, I suppose, but not yet. Anyhow, this is my mother's home."

"Then you don't think her own land would call her—if she had no one to hold her here?"

Karl shook his head.

"Yet you said she loved it."

"She loves it, but she doesn't know it. She has not lived there since she was nine. It is a sort of fairyland to her: a little remembered, a great deal imagined. She has never seen it as I have seen it, living in it full-grown, looking at it with wide-open eyes that have forgotten how to see fairies."

"But surely your mother comes to England sometimes?"

"Very rarely. She loathes the crossing and hates cold, rain, and fog; so, as there is always much to keep her here in summer, and in winter

she follows the sun, a week or two in about half a dozen years is about all she sees of England."

"And yet," General Hallam said musingly, "when I am with her, and with you too, I can never feel that I am with foreigners."

Karl laughed.

"And why should you? The English are our cousins. We're all Teutons."

"And yet—if, as you said just now, anything should happen, you would be against us?"

"If England were against Germany—yes; but why should she be?"

"I should have said that Germany was more likely to be against England," General Hallam returned dryly.

"That's because you read newspapers," Karl answered. "Put muzzles both on the English and the German Press and our countries would be firm friends."

"But where," General Hallam asked, "will you find a smith strong enough to forge those muzzles?"

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CHAPTER VI

RECALLED

" Remember, we *must* play together, and you *must* play with your heads. Whatever happens, follow the ball."—RUDYARD KIPLING.

BENEATH the great clumps of trees, systematically left standing when Herr von Rothenstein had purchased Grünberg and had cut gardens, terraces, park and polo-field out of the forest surrounding it, ponies whose turn had not yet come were chafing and fretting as their grooms led them up and down, and they twisted eager necks to catch a glimpse of what they knew to be their coming battlefield, envying those happy ponies who were already galloping one against each other at headlong speed or, whirling suddenly, swooped down upon the scudding ball, pursuing it always. The vast stretch of smooth, short turf, vividly green as if cut out of Ireland's grass-lands, lay shadowless save for the outlying trees, whose irregular groups broke its smooth tableland. Overhead the sky, deeply, cloudlessly blue, radiated heat that only the clear, dry atmosphere made bearable. In front of some large tents, opposite the trees where the spare ponies were kept in readiness, the light summer gowns of gaily dressed ladies found rivals in the polo-players' coats of many colours and the

uniforms of officers who were watching the game eagerly. The Austrian team were playing off a tie with the English team, and so closely were they matched that players, ponies and spectators, were all held in excited anticipation, watching for the first goal.

Suddenly the waiting ponies sprang back, rearing, plunging, in a wild effort to get free of their grooms, as the ball sped swift and sure across the ground straight between the tall white poles, not far removed from where they stood, scoring a goal for Austria. Scarcely had their attendants quieted them than, with reins hanging loosely on their panting ponies' necks, some of the players galloped over to where they stood and throwing their bridles to the grooms, flung themselves on to some of the waiting ponies and galloped back whence they had come. One young fellow, however, tall, fair, with regular, somewhat expressionless features, did not share the general haste. Carefully, deliberately, he examined his chestnut pony's bit and girths before mounting. The smooth, well-groomed coat, without one white mark, shone like satin in the sunshine, and he patted the arched neck caressingly. From the other side of the ground the Austrians, eager to follow up their triumph, watched him impatiently.

"What on earth is that fellow keeping us all waiting for?" Prince Kolinsky exclaimed. "I can't see who it is, but he's damned slow! Why don't you hurry him up?"

"That is Henry John," Lord Guiseborough,

the Adjutant of the 22nd Lancers, answered quietly, " and we like him exactly as he is."

Prince Kolinsky stared and then laughed. He liked these English officers. They were good sportsmen and good company. At that moment young Harvey, having at length mounted, cantered across the ground and the second game began. The Austrians, glowing with their victory, certain of further success, played brilliantly; the English a careful, defensive game.

At last Count von Palmstein, with a desperate drive, sent the ball whirling far across the ground, out of the seething mass of men and ponies that a second before had surrounded it, and Prince Kolinsky on his famous grey Arab followed it up resolutely. It looked as if the second goal must be for Austria. Then, suddenly, a shout went up from the English officers in front of the tent. " Harvey, good boy ! Go it, Henry John, go it !" And shooting out, a rapid flash of white and chestnut, into the open, young Harvey's pony galloped up to, almost on to, the grey— galloped with it neck and neck, riding Kolinsky off the ball—getting between it and him; then, with a swift turn, sending it flying back whence it had come.

" By Jove, he's got it ! Stick to it, stick to it, Harvey !" they yelled: and Harvey stuck to it, dribbling the ball along, never letting the Austrian get a chance at it, until at last he got in a clean, strong drive that sent the ball flying straight between the posts. After that the

Austrians went to pieces. They never scored another goal, and the game was soon over.

They took their defeat with the pleasant courtesy that has always hall-marked that race of great gentlemen and when they met in the tea-tent afterwards Prince Kolinsky went straight up to Guiseborough.

"I understand now why you like your Henry John exactly as he is," he said cordially.

"I thought you would," Lord Guiseborough answered dryly; and Prince Kolinsky turned smiling to his hostess, who was seated at a table close beside them.

"What I like most about your countrymen, Madame, is their odd, dry humour. We laugh or frown, are witty or dull: there is nothing between; but they have little hidden, soundless laughs, in some quite simple words."

Antoinette looked up at him from under the great white hat that made her lovely face look fair and young as a girl's.

"We are a simple people, Prince," she said quietly.

Again Kolinsky laughed.

"I wonder," he answered enigmatically; and went in search of Bowle, that delicious German cup which is made up of peaches, still Moselle, champagne and soda-water.

* * * * *

The big table in the hall was covered with primrose-coloured telegrams when the von Rothensteins and their house-party returned from the polo-ground; most of them were for the

Austrian officers, but there was one for General Hallam, one for Rosamund von Steinberg, and half a dozen for Herr von Rothenstein. The younger Austrian officers were too much occupied with the many pretty and charming girls included in the Grünberg party to trouble their heads about letters or telegrams, and lingered at the back of the hall; but Prince Kolinsky walked straight across to the table, where he found General Hallam already standing, an open telegram in his hand. It contained one word, "Consultation," and was signed "Mother." As the Prince joined him he folded the telegram carefully and put it into his pocket-book.

Kolinsky glanced at the array of primrose-coloured envelopes. "Recalled," he said, just loud enough to reach General Hallam's ears, and his alone.

"Looks like it," he answered quietly, as he replaced his pocket-book in the breast-pocket of his coat. Kolinsky opened the two or three wires addressed to him and, as he did so, Herr von Rothenstein hurried up to the table and hastily collected the pile of thick letters and the telegrams put on one side for him, and carried them off into his private den.

Prince Kolinsky turned away from the table. Young von Palmstein was the centre of a laughing, chattering group at the end of the hall. He called to him:

"Oscar! Here's news! We are recalled."

There was a sudden rush to the table, a tearing open of some dozen telegrams, a medley of ex-

clamations and enthusiasm. Rosamund von Steinberg slipped up to the table unobserved. There, pushed aside, unnoticed, was the telegram for which she had watched all day. Her fingers trembled as she took it up, so that she tore it clumsily, and as she read it the bright colour in her cheeks faded suddenly. She had been so sure of George's answer. Yet this was what he said:

"Impossible. I entreat you to do what I have asked."

CHAPTER VII

GOOD-BYE

"In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one!"

ALFRED TENNYSON: *Maud.*

THE Austrian officers had gone.

"You must come back next year to play your finals," Antoinette had called to them, as she stood in the doorway and all the light from the hall seemed to concentrate in a luminous background for her bright, fair hair and the filmy white and silver draperies of her satin gown.

"Je ne demande pas mieux, Madame," Prince Kolinsky answered; and amidst a chorus of "Auf wiedersehen" and "A bientôt," the two big cars rushed off down the avenue out into the forest road leading to the station ten miles away.

Antoinette shivered as she came back into the hall.

"How cold the air is to-night!" she exclaimed. "Let us dance;" and holding out her hand to Captain Burton, who was standing just behind her, she skimmed down the hall in a two-step, followed by all the young people of her house-party, with the exception of Lord Guiseborough, who remained smoking in the doorway beside his host. As the last of the dancers disappeared

behind the tapestry curtain which divided the marble gallery leading to the ball-room from the hall, he slowly removed the cigar from his lips and knocked the ash off carefully. As he did so he looked across at Herr von Rothenstein and saw with astonishment that his cigar had gone out. He was still looking fixedly down the avenue, following the way the cars had gone.

It was a quiet night; not a leaf stirred; birds and beasts were all asleep. So still had the outside world become that the rush of the cars out into the dark forest, the light feet of the dancers, as they tripped back from the darkness that lay across the threshold into the light and movement of the ball-room, seemed things belonging to another sphere.

Suddenly Guiseborough broke the silence.

"What exactly is *Kriegsgefahrzustand?*"* he asked.

Herr von Rothenstein started and dropped his cigar.

"*Kriegsgefahrzustand?*" he repeated.

"Yes; Harvey, who knows a bit of German, used the word about Austria's mobilisation, but Kolinsky told him it was not the same thing, though from what he said it sounded uncommonly like it."

Herr von Rothenstein had stooped to pick up

* "*Kriegsgefahrzustand*—sorte d'état de siège qui substituait les autorités militaires aux autorités civiles en ce qui regardait les services publics (voies de communication, postes, télégraphes, téléphones)."—BARON BEYENS: *L'Allemagne avant la Guerre.*

his cigar and his eyes were fixed critically on it as he answered slowly:

"No; it is not mobilisation exactly. It is a state of being ready to mobilise instantly, and it exists, I believe, only in Austria and Germany and Holland."

"I see; then it enables you to mobilise quicker than anyone else?"

"It should do so—unless other nations mobilise when we declare a state of *Kriegsgefahrzustand*."

"Even so, your *Kriegsgefahr* has got everything in readiness. It strikes me that it's like vaccination, which gets ahead of smallpox even if you're only done the very day you get the infection. Vaccination comes out quickest."

Herr von Rothenstein laughed.

"That is well! Smallpox is a most unpleasant disease. Shall we go in?" He turned towards the doorway, standing back for his guest to pass him; but Guiseborough lingered on the threshold, and his eyes followed the track leading down the avenue upon which Herr von Rothenstein's eyes had been bent so steadily—the track of the cars.

"The Austrians were sure enough it's war," he said tentatively.

Herr von Rothenstein answered by a platitude.

"For a soldier the world holds but two things: 'la guerre et l'amour.'"

Guiseborough laughed. During the days they had spent together at Grünberg it had certainly seemed to him that "l'amour" loomed largely

in the life and thoughts of both Austrian and Hungarian officers. As they entered the house Herr von Rothenstein left him, with a word of excuse as to letters to be written for the morning mail, and went off to his business room. Guiseborough threw away the end of his cigar and pushing back the heavy swing-door of old Mantua leather, passed through into the inner hall. It was empty save for one figure seated at a distant table writing rapidly by the light of a low, shaded lamp. It was General Hallam. He looked up sharply as Lord Guiseborough stopped beside his chair.

"Hullo, Jack, is that you?"

"Yes. I've been looking at the night with von Rothenstein. It's as still as death out there; the whole world might be asleep. Von Rothenstein was too, I think; I couldn't get a word out of him."

"Where is he?" General Hallam asked quickly.

"Gone off to his business room—said he had letters to write for the early morning mail, but I believe he's having a comfortable snooze while Madame dances."

General Hallam looked across the hall, beneath the lifted tapestry curtain beyond which lay the ball-room, before he answered; then, taking up his pen, he said briefly:

"Germans don't sleep as much as we do, Jack. I expect von Rothenstein has got more letters to get off by that mail than you would write in a month."

Guiseborough laughed.

" He might easily do that and yet send a light mail," he said gaily. " However, I'll leave you to yours and go and dance;" and, humming the waltz tune that floated down the gallery towards them, he straightened his tie, pulled a pair of gloves out of his pocket and hurried off.

General Hallam wrote rapidly, and finishing his letter, folded it and putting it into an envelope and lighting the little taper standing beside him, sealed it carefully. As he replaced his ring upon his finger Rosamund von Steinberg came down the staircase, a light scarf thrown about her shoulders.

" Writing, General Hallam !" she exclaimed. " Why aren't you dancing ?"

" Dancing !" he repeated. " I—was thinking of other things."

" What things ?" she queried.

He hesitated; then answered in a word.

" Fighting," he said briefly.

Rosamund started.

" Fighting," she repeated. " Why do you say that ?"

He answered by a question.

" Isn't it natural ? Half a dozen of our party —the men who were dancing here last night— have just gone off to fight."

" Or to demonstrate and frighten Servia into submission," she returned quickly. " From what Prince Kolinsky said, it will be over in no time. Of course, a little country like Servia has got no chance."

" Did Kolinsky say that ?"

"No. *I* say that: it's clear; but I heard Antoinette remind him that Fritz expects him for the opening shoot at their place in Hungary in the autumn, and he said, 'When the shooting begins you may count upon me.'"

"Did he?"

"Yes; and he ought to know, oughtn't he?"

"Kolinsky," General Hallam said slowly, "is a man of intelligence. I should think it quite possible that he does know—a good deal."

"Then there will be nothing of a war," Rosamund cried triumphantly, "and you must come and dance."

General Hallam rose obediently and, putting the letter he had written into his pocket, he followed her down the marble gallery into the ball-room.

Antoinette saw them coming and went quickly towards them.

"Come over here," she said, pointing to a sofa at the far end of the room. "Marie de la Haye is going to sing for us. As she spoke, a tall, slim girl, with a wealth of raven-black hair coiled closely round her head, struck a few chords upon a zither. With a strange, sad sound, they vibrated through the room; the next moment her voice rose clear and full, dominating, yet mingling with, the weird sadness of the strings. It was a Hungarian love-song that she sang, and though the language was strange to her listeners, voice and instrument carried its meaning straight into their hearts. When the last notes of the zither, and the applause that

followed them, had died away, Antoinette turned to General Hallam.

"You must come to see us in Hungary," she said. "You won't mind roughing it in a wooden chalet, I know, and I want you to see the wonderful country. One gets so close to nature there: clear of all the trivialities and artificialities; going there from here is like leaping from a hot-house into a lake. You, who like everything fresh and cool and clear, will love it."

"You are very kind," General Hallam answered, "but I am afraid it will be impossible. I have just had a telegram recalling me to England to-morrow."

"To-morrow! Oh, impossible! You must stay till next week."

"I wish I could; but I am obliged to go back at once."

"Oh, I am sorry. Have you had bad news?"

General Hallam hesitated.

"I don't know. My mother has been in bad health for some time, and now a specialist is to be called in. I want to be there."

"Of course; I understand," Antoinette said gently. "You are an only son, are you not?"

"An only child."

"An only child," she repeated, "like my Karl. You must certainly go. I do hope you will find all well;" and with an impulsive gesture of sympathy she stretched out her hand to him.

"Thank you," he answered, "and I hope that all will go well with you and with your Karl;"

and as he spoke he lifted the slim hand to his lips. "Good-night and good-bye," he said.

"Not good-bye; *auf wiedersehen!* That's a wish," Antoinette corrected, smiling; but General Hallam's face was grave as he answered:

"The English words are a prayer: God be with you," he said.

* * * * *

Antoinette had lived so long abroad that it now seemed to her more natural that men should kiss her hand than shake it, and it was not until she got up to her own room that she recollected that General Hallam was an Englishman, and that he had never kissed her hand before. He had been strangely serious too. He must, she feared, be very anxious about his mother. Englishmen showed emotion in such odd ways.

CHAPTER VIII

"KRIEGSGEFAHR?"

"Car on riait dans ces temps là . . .
Oui, qui nous rendra, cher ami, l'ombre
Des bonnes nuits, et les beaux jours au rire ardent."

PAUL VERLAINE.

SOME three days later Herr von Rothenstein came in late for luncheon. In the cosmopolitan household of Grünberg, where a French *chef* presided over the kitchen and an English butler had charge of the silver, the one o'clock meal was really luncheon and the evening meal a light and delicately selected French dinner instead of a heavy and coarsely chosen German supper. The generous interval which Germany accords her business men for their midday repast, therefore, gave ample time for Herr von Rothenstein to return in his car, lunch, smoke a cigar and even play a hand at bridge, while his clerks were dining and digesting. On this particular day, however, he came in very late and found everyone waiting for him in the hall, as Antoinette would never go in without him. Why should butterflies feed before bees?" she asked; and as no one could find a satisfactory reply, they waited.

On this occasion, however, Fritz seemed vexed that they had not begun and hurried them into

the round dining-room, always used when the party was small enough, bidding the butler accelerate the invariably swift service.

" I can't see the use of having one of the first *chefs* in Europe if you don't get time to take in the taste of one dish before the next is plumped down in front of you," Mrs. Crosland murmured plaintively. " With a real *recherché* menu like this, not many dishes, but every one perfect of its kind, you must either go nap or get up hungry."

Lord Guiseborough laughed.

" It's like dining with the Austrian Emperor," he said. " I did it once at Schönbrunn when I was attached to a special Mission—something like nine or ten courses served in about twenty minutes, a servant behind every chair whipping your plate away after your second mouthful. However, I made up on the wine. It was simply wonderful."

" Well, I hope you have a strong head," Mrs. Crosland commented, " for the ease with which liquid is swallowed is sadly misleading to those who haven't."

Lord Guiseborough laughed and quoted gaily:

" ' Men swallow unadvisedly sometimes,
Which after time gives leisure to repent.
But though they do not swallow all their crimes,
They think the swallow time not badly spent.' "

" And who," Mrs. Crosland asked severely, " wrote that most immoral verse ?"

" Oh, an Irish pal of mine: a capital fellow."

" Well, if he is Irish I suppose he knows what

he is talking about. But why everyone who wants to mention drink should make verses and songs about it, I have never been able to understand. Teetotallers are content with prose."

"Well, you could hardly write a poem on a teapot, could you? Though if you made it a kettle singing on the hearth, you know, and all that, it would do for toddy as well as tea and be quite cheerful. But a teapot itself—well, a tract is the only place for it I'm afraid."

"And tracts," Mrs. Crosland said regretfully, "are never read by the people for whose benefit they were written."

At that moment Antoinette rose, and a general move was made on to the terrace outside the long French windows of the room in which they had lunched. It was very pleasant to sit out there under the great awning in one of the low basket chairs, sipping coffee and smoking cigarettes, sheltered from the sun, yet looking out into its radiance.

As Antoinette stepped out from the window her husband went up to her and said something low and quickly. Her dainty eyebrows lifted in surprise as she listened; then, as he continued, she made a gesture of assent, and turning towards the ladies of her house-party and a group of German officers, she led them to a table at the far end of the terrace which was just in front of a window opening into the marble gallery. Mrs. Crosland and her neighbour were following her, when Herr von Rothenstein laid his hand on Guiseborough's arm.

" Let us sit down here, Lord Guiseborough," he said, indicating a table to the right of the dining-room windows, " and you too, Captain Burton, and you, Mr. Denham—I don't see young Charlton."

" Here I am," a youthful voice answered, and a tall, broad-shouldered boy, with one of those fair skins that no sun can tan, emerged from the dining-room munching a *marron glacé*.

So used had the Englishmen grown during their stay at Grünberg to the foreign fashion of escorting their partners from, as well as to, the dining-room, that they looked with some surprise across the terrace to the table where Antoinette presided and where her son and the rest of her guests had joined her. What was up ? they wondered.

Herr von Rothenstein, after making a remark about the gnats, which seemed bent on aggression, suddenly lapsed into silence, and it was not until the coffee and liqueurs and cigars had been handed that he broke it. He had taken cognac, and Guiseborough, who was sitting opposite to him, noted that directly it was poured out he drank it at one gulp. As he set down the glass he looked up and his eyes met Guiseborough's full.

" I heard something this morning," he said quietly, " which you may all like to know."

" About Austria ?" Guiseborough asked quickly.

Herr von Rothenstein hesitated.

" Indirectly," he said; " I was told, privately,

that—all my horses and polo-ponies might be commandeered—shortly."

As he spoke, a ripple of laughter from the table at the other end of the terrace floated over to them, but no one heeded it. There was a moment of dead silence. Then Baby Charlton spoke.

"By Jove! War!" he said.

Herr von Rothenstein shot a quick glance at him, and Guiseborough kicked him under the table heavily.

"What exactly does this warning mean?" Lord Guiseborough asked slowly.

"Nothing *exactly;* but it is right that I should tell you it may be the forerunner of *Kriegsgefahrzustand.*"

"Thank you," Guiseborough answered; and getting up from the table, he strolled over to that at which Antoinette was still keeping her guests in a perpetual ripple of laughter.

* * * * *

An hour later Baby Charlton found him alone in the smoking-room writing busily. The boy took up a waiting position, standing by the fireplace near the bay-window in which the writing-table stood.

Presently Guiseborough looked up.

"That you, Baby? Where are the others?"

"Playing tennis."

"And why aren't you playing too?"

Baby hesitated.

"Well, if you don't mind, I wanted to ask you whether we oughtn't to go?"

" I'm going to-night," Guiseborough answered.

Baby Charlton's face lighted up.

" Good ! May I go with you ?"

" Yes, if you like. I suppose the lot of us will go."

Baby shook his head.

" Not much," he answered dryly. " Frau von Rothenstein said it was nonsense to think this order meant anything serious. It was just a threat to frighten Russia and make her climb down as she did over Bosnia-Herzegovina, and we couldn't possibly spoil her tableaux by rushing off now, so Burton and Denham said of course they were only too glad to stop on as long as she wanted them."

" And Herr von Rothenstein ? What did he say ?"

" Oh, Madame appealed to him, of course, and he said, ' Mein Engel, our guests know how glad we are to have them so long as they are happy and comfortable here. Their pleasure is ours.' "

" H'm !" said Guiseborough. " But you don't feel like stopping. Why not ?"

The boy's fair face flushed hotly.

" Well," he said awkwardly, " you remember the night the Austrians were recalled ?"

Guiseborough nodded.

" You know all their telegrams were laid out on the hall table. There was one for General Hallam. I saw him open it. I know him at home—his place is next my father's. We shoot together. He has a way of wrinkling up his

eyes when he sees something, or gets hold of a thing, you know. When he opened that telegram his eyes wrinkled right up under the lids till you could hardly see them; then he gave one look at the Austrians—you remember how they were all talking at once—and went off. He left that night, and by lunch-time next day Henry John had gone too."

"I remember," Guiseborough said. "He asked for Hallam at breakfast and Madame said he'd been summoned home—his mother was ill. Henry John had a wire the same afternoon—didn't know anyone else had noticed it."

"Well, I knew Henry John pretty well at Eton," Baby said apologetically. "And I know he don't move unless there's something to move for. Lies about in chairs, you know, half asleep; but when he does move, it means there's something to move for. I've never known Henry John miss a chance yet, and I don't want to miss mine."

"Right!" said Guiseborough, "we'll start to-night."

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

PEACE OR WAR

"C'est un matin comme tous les matins. Dans toutes les chambres des maisons chaque groupe humain, couple ou famille, accomplit les rites accoutumés. Partout le feu s'allume, l'eau coule, les rideaux s'écartent, la lumière pénètre, le berceau frémit et jase, la femme rit à son miroir. Partout dans la sécurité pacifique de la cité se renoue la chaine des pensées et des actes, et le rhythme de la vie, rattachant hier à demain, est si régulier qu'il semble indivisible."—MARCELLE TINAYRE: *La Veillée des Armes.*

ENGLAND. Friday, July 31, 1914. The last day of the Goodwood Meeting; London emptied; the houses of the fashionable world closed and shuttered. Shops in demi-toilette; cats and cabs on the prowl; the former finding all their household arrangements upset by the departure of their households; the latter hoping that departure of such households would send a job their way, since those not fashionable, or foolish, enough to go to Goodwood may yet be bent on Bank-holiday-making. On such a day throughout three reigns half the West End has seemed asleep, the other half agape for the coming holiday, and even on this Friday in July, '14, in one of London's streets alone is there unwonted movement: incessant coming and going, swift and silent, yet no bustle of traffic, since this short

wide road is no thoroughfare. Every now and then a car or taxi dashes up to one of the great stone buildings, whose shadows keep the roadway cool and dim; but the traffic is mostly of foot passengers: men with anxious, preoccupied faces, quickly crossing from one building to another; messengers hastening along with packets of papers or despatch-boxes; telegraph boys, messenger boys; Downing Street alive, vital from end to end.

Behind the small doorway opening on to the Horse Guards Parade two or three cars were standing, and had stood for some time. To the right of the steps that led up to its narrow entrance the great bare Parade-ground stretched out shadowless, a field of sunshine; but the steps lay in the shadow of the building, and within the doorway the stone-flagged passage was cool and dim as always, albeit the habitual stillness ruling there was rudely broken by the noise of hurrying feet and of the ever-recurrent click of the gates that shut in the small lift leading to the Secretary of State's room, a discordant jar vibrating through the passages as they admitted, or released, those who had business there.

Within this room and others near it grave-faced men were talking in slow words, carefully guarded against misconception, misrepresentation. Upon the face of each man who entered those rooms was set one seal, and when he left them and passed once more out into the world of sunshine the imprint of it lay there still, the imprint of one word: anxiety.

Yet, as it ever is, the burden lay more heavily on those who stayed than on those who went and came. The latter acted under orders to a given end, facing certain contingencies, knowing what must and would be done should they arise; assured also that their countries, instructed through the centuries, never allowed to forget the lessons of the past, ever educated to face, not fear, the future, knew this also, and would back with blood and bone whatsoever their brains might find needful. With those who remained it was not thus. England has not been trained to regard war as her means of existence, the essence of her being; upon her has been laid no necessity of justifying by war apparently unwarrantable outlay upon armaments; she has no great wrongs to avenge, nor does she covet her neighbours' goods. To her alone, therefore, neither trammelled by self-forged fetters, warped by desire, nor blinded by passion, was any clear outlook towards the future possible. It was as though other countries had been harnessed with blinkers, forced to face a straight issue, while Britain had an open outlook on all sides. It seemed that, during these latter July days, gradually unrolled before her, lay an anatomical map nakedly revealing the animosities and the ambitions of a Continent. These animosities and ambitions were not hers; yet at every point they stretched their tentacles towards her. Once let them grapple with each other, and the force and impetus of that death-grip must surely reach to us also. And who could say how far beyond us

yet ? What possibility was there of gauging the power of hitherto sleeping, and therefore unknown, forces which such a world-wide conflict must arouse, let loose ? That which appeared unthinkable had to be thought of, and the situation which must certainly arise should four of the Great Powers of Europe become involved in war be faced, foreseen. Such a war must involve an expenditure so vast and an interference with trade so radical and far-reaching that inevitably a complete, or all but complete, collapse of European credit and industry must accompany or follow it; and now that all great States are huge industrial centres, who could say, irrespective of what countries might be victors in the war, what things might be completely and irrevocably swept away ? Those who had studied the upheaval of '48 and its results believed that, under present conditions, such a war now must produce a state infinitely worse than that which then prevailed.

Was it yet possible that a way of peace might, even at this eleventh hour, be found ? This was the question to which the men remaining in the cool, spacious rooms of the great stone building whose shadows fell across the sunlit space outside, ceaselessly sought an answer. Within these walls, year after year, consistently, ceaselessly, one aim had been ever kept in view: that of the preservation of honourable peace; the peace of the world. And the world knew this; it had been proved and universally admitted in the Balkan crisis.

Would the trust and confidence then won yet bear fruit, gaining the one essential factor, time: time in which differences might be discussed, solutions sought? In Paris, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg and Rome, our Embassies were working night and day to this end, as those here in London were working now. Incessantly, to and fro, between the capitals, telegrams flashed, the rejection of one suggestion instantly followed by the inception of another.

The renewed conversations between Austria and Russia seemed to give some glimmer of hope. and to Germany the guarantee offered in Sir Edward Grey's telegram of the previous day, Thursday, July 30,* had already furnished full security that any action she might take in the cause of peace should in no way weaken her position or expose her to attack.†

Were Germany sincere in her expressed desire to " press the button in the cause of peace," it could be secured.

The sincerity of Germany was the question upon which the peace of Europe hung.

* Orange Book, No. 69, M. Sazonov to Count Benckendorff: " J'ai prié l'Ambassadeur d'Angleterre de transmettre à Grey l'expression de ma plus sincère reconnaissance pour le ton amical et ferme dont il a usé pendant les pourparlers avec l'Allemagne et l'Autriche, grâce à quoi l'espoir trouver une solution pacifique n'est pas encore perdu."

† " If the peace of Europe can be preserved and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party by which she could be assured that no aggressive policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately."—British Diplomatic Correspondence, No. 101.

CHAPTER II

MOTHER AND SON

"The people must urge the Government on and inflame among Germany's leaders that confidence and resolution which lead to great deeds."—GENERAL VON BERNHARDI: *Britain as Germany's Vassal*, p. 223.

LADY HALLAM was a charming personality. She was one of those women of strong brain and delicate physique who recall to one that few of our greatest men have been robust in constitution, and suggest a query as to whether only these delicate frames are finely strung enough to conceive them. There had, however, been nothing finely strung about the late Sir George Hallam, that excellent soldier of the commonplace order, generally appreciated and generously approved, since he had no outstanding talents to challenge criticism or provoke envy. Their son had discreetly chosen his father's physique, while preferring his mother's brilliant intelligence to the sensible mediocrity of the paternal brain. He was their only child, and his life was the chord to which his mother had set her own. The expression in her eyes as she looked at him across the dinner-table told this.

It was Saturday, August 1, and the latest edition of the evening paper had just been brought

in. Lady Hallam watched her son anxiously as he opened it.

"Nothing more than I told you when I came in," he said. "The report published by the Berlin *Tageszeitung* yesterday that diplomatic relations between Austria and Russia had been broken off is an invention. Somehow or other Germany has got to put Russia in the wrong."

"You think she is absolutely determined to force a war?"

"The war-party are. Up to now the Emperor has held them back. He meant to wait, I think, until Franz Joseph was dead. The late Archduke was his greatest personal friend, and I believe they had everything planned out. The Archduke knew that in a successful war with the German Emperor as his ally lay his only chance of securing his children's succession."

"I suppose that is so," Lady Hallam said thoughtfully. "It is clear that the present heir, practically unknown and untried, is not an ally to wait for, and Franz Joseph can lead his people still."

"Yes; and Germany can lead him," General Hallam answered grimly. As he spoke the door opened and a telegram was brought in and handed to him. Lady Hallam grew suddenly white; she had seen other telegrams come to her son in some tense moment such as this and they had always meant danger. She would not have held him back; yet, how it ever hurt to see him go!

He looked up.

" It's from Berlin. I asked Walter Bradley to wire to me when he could see clear, and it's clear enough now. The Kaiser has addressed his people! ' Vast enthusiastic crowd Palace,' he says. ' The Kaiser summoned them to sacrafice " Gut and Blut " to strengthen the sword forced into his hand.' He can't let go the sword now. He is an orator conducted by his audience; directly he faces them he feels what they want him to say and says it, whatever he may have intended and still think."

" And his unfortunate people think they want war," Lady Hallam said sadly.

" You see they have been trained to look on war as deliverance from enemies and evil. They were a down-trodden, despised, miserable race when Frederick the Great came to the throne. He made war and delivered them, and made them into a great nation, and in every war since they have been victorious; most of us like doing what we do better than other people."

" But this time?"

" This time, please God, they will learn a new lesson; but it seems to me we shall have to learn a lot ourselves first. This country has not Germany's experience and memories. England has never really felt war since the time of the Stuarts. The sea has lain between her and her foes."

" And you think they will reach her now?"

" They will reach her, though perhaps not here; but if England is to keep them out she must go to them. This war won't be an affair

of picked regiments; it will be a war of nations."

"Yes," Lady Hallam said thoughtfully, "in all past wars it was only in our own class that everyone had husband, son, brother—someone near and dear—serving. In the lower classes not one in a hundred even knew anyone who was fighting. To them war meant something interesting to read about in the papers, and someone to cheer when the troops came home."

"It will mean more now," her son answered quietly.

"You think we are certain to come in?" she queried.

"I don't see how we can help it. It seems that on Wednesday Germany made a big bid for our neutrality, undertaking to take no territory from France should she be beaten if we would stand out, but making it clear that her colonies would be seized."

Lady Hallam's eyes flashed angrily.

"How dared they try to bribe us! What did we reply?"

"Well, as it was summarised to me the reply was drastic. That it would be as damnably against our honour as it would be infernally bad policy; but it was put into beautiful diplomatic language, of course."

Lady Hallam sighed.

"What a pity!" she said regretfully.

General Hallam laughed.

"Don't be unhappy," he said encouragingly; "it was quite nice, even in diplomatic language.

They pointed out that from a material point of view it was undesirable, and from a moral dishonourable, and that to make such a bargain with Germany at the expense of France would be a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover."

Lady Hallam's beautiful eyes brightened and a flush rose in her cheeks.

"That is good," she said. "Worthy of England!"

"Yes; and Germany recognised it: she seems to have made a sort of apology—had not been fully informed of our point of view, etc."

"Yet she does not propose to reconsider her own?"

Osbert Hallam shook his head.

"It is too late. The Emperor's speech has settled it. He *must* lead, and the moment has come when he can only lead by following the path his people have chosen. I met one or two men when I was in Germany who were really intimate with him; knew him thoroughly and liked him well. People who know him *do* like him. When he chooses to charm, he charms, and he is full of interest in everything and knows something—something sound too—about most things."

"I have always heard that he was clever," Lady Hallam answered; but her son shook his head.

"I don't know that I should quite say that; but his intelligence is unquestionable; he catches the hang of a thing at once, only—he must never

be wrong—which means, of course, that he is seldom altogether right—he must also be the people's idol."

"But if he is so intelligent, why can't he see——?"

"My dear mother, he sees that it is war—or the loss of his throne. The thing has been well engineered; Germany is ready, the people are shouting for war, and if he doesn't lead them he will cease to be a leader, and to him leadership is life itself. He hears God's command voiced in the shouts of his people."

"Yet I thought," Lady Hallam said gently, "that the true command came in 'a still small voice'?"

"I did not say it was a true command," her son answered, "only that the Kaiser so accepted it; but——"

A ring at the front-door interrupted him.

"Who on earth can that be?" he queried and, getting up, walked over to the window to look out.

"Hullo! it's Armstrong! What does he want at this hour? You don't mind his coming in here, do you, mother?"

"Of course not," Lady Hallam answered cordially, and her son hurried out to meet his guest in the hall.

"Do forgive me for coming in like this, Lady Hallam," Colonel Armstrong said, as he followed Osbert back into the dining-room. "It's too bad, but the fact is I only heard half an hour ago that Hallam had just got back from Germany,

and as I think he may perhaps be able to give me some information I badly want, I came straight off here."

"Quite right," Lady Hallam said kindly. "Sit down and have a glass of port and a cigar. I am going up to the drawing-room, but if you have time come up and see me before you go."

"Thanks awfully," Colonel Armstrong answered, and held open the door for her to pass out.

"Take my mother's chair," Hallam said, "and help yourself to port."

"Thanks," George Armstrong answered, and filling his glass, sipped it thoughtfully; then he looked up.

"It's too bad to bother you like this," he said apologetically, "but the fact is I'm confoundedly worried, and I think you may be able to help me. Do you mind if I dash straight into it?"

"Go ahead!"

Colonel Armstrong, however, paused a moment; then—"You met Baroness von Steinberg at the von Rothensteins', didn't you?" he said tentatively.

General Hallam nodded.

"Well, I'm engaged to her."

"The devil you are!"

"Yes; it only came off just as I was leaving, and it wasn't regularly given out though of course Frau von Rothenstein knew; but Mrs. Crosland was dead set on writing the news to all her friends and relations in America before the von Steinberg relatives, whom she hates like poison, could get wind of it."

Again he paused and lighted his cigar carefully; but General Hallam said nothing and smoked on, lending a courteous and apparently uninterested attention, and it was his guest who again broke through the silence that had fallen between them.

"It's war, I suppose," he said suddenly.

"Looks like it," Osbert answered laconically.

"And that, of course, means that Rosamund will be an alien enemy?"

"She will."

"Then what the devil am I to do?"

"It—seems a little late—to do anything successfully," General Hallam said slowly.

"I know. I've been trying for a week to get her over here, but I couldn't say why, of course; they tell me letters get well supervised over there, and I promised Leigh I'd say nothing; but her mother wouldn't give in an inch. We had undertaken to wait and be married in America next October, and she held to that."

"H'm! it looks as if you might have to wait a bit beyond October now."

"That's the damned part of it! Do you think, if I could get her to start now, she'd be able to get over all right?"

"If she were English, possibly; but she's German and has, I suppose, a German dowry, as they call it, on her first husband's property. I'm afraid there's not much chance that they would let her come over here. Indeed, moving troops as they are doing, even if they made no official difficulty, she would find it hard to get

through. Germany must have a pretty good idea by now that we shall have to be reckoned with."

George Armstrong pushed back his chair impatiently and began pacing up and down the room.

" But so long as war isn't declared they have no right to stop her."

" She must, however, find a train to travel in, and all the railways have been taken over by the Government."

Colonel Armstrong groaned.

" But, good God, is there *nothing* to be done ?"

The misery of his tone broke down the somewhat unsympathetic reserve of Osbert Hallam's manner.

" Candidly, I don't see much chance of it," he said kindly. " But why don't you go down to the F.O. and see Leigh ? He's working all night, I know, so you are safe to find him, and he's a good chap. If he *can* squeeze five minutes for you, he will, and if anyone can find a way out it's Leigh."

" I believe you're right there; but I thought perhaps, as you'd just come over from Germany and had seen Rosamund, you might be able to give me an idea or two—or—tell me something about her."

General Hallam's moustache hid a smile.

" She was looking particularly pretty and charming," he answered cordially.

George Armstrong's countenance lightened.

" Did you talk to her much ?" he asked eagerly.

"A certain amount; but there were a lot of people there, you know, of all nationalities, and she is essentially cosmopolitan and speaks all languages. She was much in request; she would always be that, even if she spoke no language at all!"

"I thought you would admire her," Colonel Armstrong said, and the anxious lines in his forehead smoothed out comfortably. "Did she seem—worried at all?"

"Not a great deal," General Hallam said reflectively. "Prince Kolinsky, the Captain of the Austrian polo team, had convinced her that his country would have a walk over."

"Kolinsky? He must know better than that."

"I think he did. His words to Baroness von Steinberg might be read in two ways, but she read them—as he desired. You must remember, too, that every German paper has, from the outset, insisted that it is Austria's affair alone, and that *she must be given a free hand to do what she pleases*."*

"Do they really think any of us will stand that?"

"They wish the people to believe that they do and that it is our duty to do it. It is difficult to obtain the unanimous consent of a nation to any war of aggression, but once let them see it is a war of defence and the thing's done."

"They can scarcely make out that war now would be a defensive war!"

* *Kölnische Zeitung*, July 26–28, 1914.

General Hallam smiled.

'Germany is full of resources," he said dryly.

Colonel Armstrong rose.

" Well, if the Germans do that—" he stopped and ended suddenly—" I'm blowed !"

" It's quite possible you may be," Osbert answered, as he shook the hand held out to him and accompanied his guest to the hall door.

On the steps Colonel Armstrong paused.

" I shall have another try to get her away," he said resolutely; " and if they try to stop her—— !"

He walked rapidly down the street, and Osbert Hallam stood for a moment in the doorway watching him; then he turned back into the hall and closing the door behind him went upstairs into the drawing-room.

His mother was lying on a sofa near one of the long French windows looking out on to the trees of the square.

She turned towards him as she heard the door open.

" Why didn't you bring Colonel Armstrong up with you ?" she asked.

" He was hardly in a social mood, so I let him go—damning the Germans ! Do you ever wonder, mother, how many of the souls annually consigned by their fellow-beings to the nethermost hell are ever delivered there ?"

CHAPTER III

AT DAWN

"In studying the political history of States one finds that the greatest successes have been obtained whenever an active policy, following a distinct aim, has in all enterprises only calculated with the factor of force, disregarding every law except that of its own advantage."—GENERAL VON BERNHARDI: *Britain as Germany's Vassal.*

IT was late before Geoffrey Leigh got back to his private room that night, and the work awaiting him there made any idea of getting out for a belated dinner, or supper, hopeless; he therefore rang for his servant and ordered some sandwiches and whisky-and-soda and set to work, rejoicing in the stillness of his room, through whose windows the sound of infrequent traffic, far below in St. James's Park, came only as a smothered murmur. He expected to work through most of the night, as he had done the previous day; but to him it was infinitely easier to do this alone, undisturbed by the presence and by the comings and goings of others. The soft air of the summer night filled the room, and the cold, clear shining of the stars was very restful after the glaring sunshine of the day. Scarcely, however, had this comforting sense of stillness and of isolation sunk into his soul, when his servant entered and, placing a plate of sandwiches beside him, said deprecatingly:

"Mr. Charlton wishes to see you, sir. I was to say that he had arrived from Germany on Wednesday."

"Oh, well, bring him up," Geoffrey said briefly, and dived into his work again. He might at least finish this sheet before Charlton interrupted him. He wrote rapidly, and had got to the final phrase when his guest was shown in.

"Hullo, Baby! didn't know that you were back. How are you? Sit down and have some food. I haven't had time to dine."

"I suppose not," young Charlton answered, as he began munching a sandwich with his never-failing appetite. "It's all right, I suppose?"

"What's all right?"

"War."

"You should know best about that," Geoffrey retorted, as he opened a bottle of soda-water, "as you're fresh from Germany."

"Oh, it looks right enough there," Baby answered cheerily. "That's why I came over; but I've put in two days at Goodwood all right. Herr von Rothenstein told us on Tuesday he had just been warned privately that all his horses and polo ponies might be commandeered at any moment. He said it was only preparatory to *Kriegsgefahrzustand*, if you know what that is."

Geoffrey nodded.

"The German language is very rich," he said; "it defines clearly degrees and differences unknown in other countries."

"Well, anyhow, they're moving. We found

bridges and railways guarded when we left—preparing for the autumn manœuvres, they said—and several regiments had arrived in field kit."*

Geoffrey made no comment.

"I suppose you all came back together?" he said inquiringly.

"No; only Guiseborough and myself. Burton and Dick Denham stopped on. You see, nobody at Grünberg thought anything of it except Herr von Rothenstein, and he never says what he thinks, you know. They mostly say it will be just a big demonstration and then Russia will climb down, like she did in 1909. Anyhow, they're certain of one thing—whatever happens, England won't fight. The papers are strong on that—say it's no affair of ours and if England behaves with the 'honour' she has shown in late years she will keep out of it and keep others out too."†

"What about Harvey?" Geoffrey asked, as he pushed the whisky decanter across the table to his guest.

"Oh, he left the day after the Austrian officers were recalled. Hallam went that morning, and when Henry John missed him he packed his portmanteau."

"Hallam's a good man to follow."

"And so's Henry John," young Charlton struck in warmly. "I'd have followed them sooner, but I didn't see how to do it decently without

* French Yellow Book, No. 28, p. 107.
† *Kölnische Zeitung*, 28, S.14.

getting a telegram, and of course, I had to write home for that. Henry John went off into the town and said he found one at the club, but it sounded jolly thin! You see Frau von Rothenstein doesn't seem to have a notion that things are serious. He keeps it from her—one can see that; and it makes things a bit awkward."

"Poor woman!"

"Yes; it will be pretty rough on her if we do fight. Stupid thing to marry out of one's own country. One can't always have the same friends, of course, but damn it all one can have the same enemies!"

Geoffrey laughed.

"Was Frau von Steinberg there when you left?" he asked.

"Oh yes. Her mother won't move till they go to America. She's an American, you know."

"Yes, I know. I suppose she didn't fret about the war, either?"

"Well, she asked a lot of questions; but she wouldn't hear that there was any possibility of a flare up—got quite cross if anyone suggested it. Can't see the good of asking questions if you only want your own answer."

"Nor can I," Geoffrey agreed. "And look here, Baby, I've no time to ask or answer any to-night, so suppose you clear out."

"All right," the boy returned good-humouredly, hoisting himself out of the low chair in which he had lounged contentedly as he ate his sandwiches; "I'll be off. Don't think you've told me anything, though."

" Don't think I have. Good-night."

With a laugh, Baby Charlton took up his hat and went out.

Geoffrey gave a sigh of relief and hastily putting the plates and glasses back on a side table he plunged into his work. All day long telegrams between all the great capitals of Europe, and many smaller ones, had come and gone, linking up a Continent that seemed straining to tear itself asunder. The reply of the French Government to the inquiries Sir Edward Grey had addressed the previous day both to Paris and Berlin regarding the neutrality of Belgium had been received very early in the morning, having been despatched over-night. France had expressed herself resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium, and had stated that the President had given this assurance to the King of the Belgians the previous day, and also the French Minister at Brussels to the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs.*

Germany had not replied. The Foreign Secretary, Herr von Jagow, had put forward the necessity of consulting the Kaiser and the Chancellor, thus gaining time, and waiting for the reply of France which they were obviously anxious to have imparted to them. Meanwhile the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs at Brussels had assured the Belgian Ministers in Berlin, Paris and London, by telegram that morning, that there was every reason to believe " that the attitude of the German Government

* British Diplomatic Correspondence, No. 125.

will be the same as that of the Government of the French Republic."*

Yet during the twenty-four hours that had elapsed since the receipt of Sir Edward Grey's telegram in Berlin† no word had been said in answer, and our Ambassador there was not again to see Herr von Jagow until Sunday afternoon, some sixteen hours later.‡ What would those hours bring?

Across the Horse Guards Parade the windows of the Admiralty were brilliantly lighted. To the men working there, as to those here, the barriers between night and day had been swept away. Night came whenever some brief lull made it possible to fling oneself down on a sofa for three or four hours' sleep; day, with the call to work whenever it might come. Through the great wireless installation opposite orders flashed far and wide, safeguarding our Empire, as from and to these rooms, by mail, by messenger, by wire, despatches went and came ceaselessly, each one laden with something, were it but a feather's weight, to throw into the scale still balancing between the two great issues—peace and war.

During the day Monsieur Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, had received a despatch from the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Monsieur Viviani, informing him that the Austrian Ambassador, Count Szecsen, had declared to him that his Government had no desire

* Belgian Grey Book, No. 9.
† French Yellow Book, No. 123, p. 135.
‡ *Ibid.* No. 123, p. 135.

to infringe the sovereign rights of Servia nor to acquire any of her territory if the war could remain localised, and had further led him to understand that, although the Austrian Government felt unable to reply to questions presented by the Great Powers as their own, they would no doubt do so if Servia herself, or any one Power acting in her name, were to make the enquiries. From St. Petersburg, also, he had received news which seemed to indicate possibilities of a pacific solution, the Austrian Ambassador there having declared to Monsieur Sazonoff, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, that his Government had consented to discuss the basis of the ultimatum to Servia: a suggestion with which Monsieur Sazonoff had declared himself satisfied, and had suggested that the Conversations should take place in London.*

These statements made it clear that Austria was at last evincing a disposition to discuss terms of settlement and that the Russian Government was fully prepared to negotiate upon the basis proposed by England. Unhappily Monsieur Viviani had felt constrained to point out in his despatch to the Embassies of France that the attitude of Germany appeared expressly designed to annul this inclination towards a pacific solution since, at midnight of the day when the Conversations reported by Monsieur Viviani had taken place, the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg had called upon

* French Yellow Book, Nos. 120–121.

Monsieur Sazonoff and had informed him by order of his Government that, unless Russia commenced demobilisation, not only as regarded Germany but as regarded Austria also, within twelve hours, Germany would be forced to mobilise. This in face of the fact that Russia's acceptance of the Austrian proposals implied a stay of military preparations by all the Great Powers. Germany's attitude had also been further emphasised in Paris by the action of the Ambassador who, when calling at the French Foreign Office on the 31st to enquire what position France intended to take up in the event of war between Germany and Russia, had sent a message of farewell to the President of the Republic, and had inquired what arrangements the Government would be good enough to make for himself personally. This suggestion of suspended diplomatic relations, when no personal quarrel between France and Germany existed, and its assumption at the very moment when England's proposed basis of negotiations had been accepted by both Austria and Russia, established beyond doubt the utter insincerity of her pacific protestations. As Monsieur Viviani wrote, " Germany's attitude proves that she desires war, and *desires it* against France."*

It seemed to Geoffrey Leigh that he was very near the centre of things that night as he worked on, facing the lighted windows of the Admiralty, and heard the swiftly passing hours, that meant so much, chimed with relentless regularity by

* French Yellow Book, No. 120, p. 133.

the methodical great clock outside. Time would not stay even one passing moment; and to gain time was the one thing needful.

During the afternoon Sir Edward Grey had telegraphed to Sir Edward Goschen: "I still believe that it might be possible to secure peace *if only a little respite of time* can be gained before any Great Power begins war. Things ought not to be hopeless so long as Austria and Russia are ready to converse. . . . His Majesty's Government are carefully abstaining from any act which might precipitate matters."*

Yes; with determined faith in the better, higher side of men and Governments, England's Foreign Secretary worked, and tried to hope, that the world's peace might yet be preserved. To him it was clear that were this peace once broken by any of the Great Powers the consequences would be incalculable. One result only was certain: every Great Power in Europe, whether or no herself a belligerent, would suffer terribly. To the younger spirits in the Foreign Office, however, this wide and far-reaching outlook was not given; to youth, war and love appear as states of being rather than as volcanoes destroying states of being. Only in detachment from the work of war, detachment from the passions of youth, is true foresight possible.

Upon Geoffrey Leigh, therefore, the increasing gravity of the telegrams he had to deal with did not weigh oppressively; rather, indeed, did the excitement of the ever-varying news act as a

* Miscellanies, No. 6 (1914), No. 131.

tonic on his tired frame, so that neither food nor sleep nor any of the things of everyday life seemed to matter. Steadily, rapidly, he worked on; eleven o'clock struck, then one quarter after another chimed the last hour of the day, and as its first stroke clashed through the night the door opened and one of the office-keepers came in.

"Another telegram?" Geoffrey asked, without looking up.

"No, sir; a gentleman asking to see you."

"Tell him I can't see anyone. I'm busy."

"I did, sir, but he said it was very urgent."

Geoffrey took up the card placed on the table beside him and glanced at it impatiently.

"Oh, well, bring him up," he said curtly, and went on writing.

He had not, however, made much progress when the door reopened and Colonel Armstrong came in.

"It's a beastly shame routing you up like this, old chap, when you're up to your eyes in work, but I'm in an awful hole about Rosamund, and Hallam said if anyone could see a way out it would be you. I've been to the club to see if there was any news which would make my getting a letter through possible without bothering you, but things seem thickening rather than clearing, so—here I am!"

"But, my dear fellow, what on earth can I do?"

"Well, I don't know, but I thought perhaps you could get a letter through—or——"

"Do you suppose the Embassy has any time

for our private affairs? The ordinary mails are going."

"Yes; but will those damned Germans ever let my letter reach her?"

"I should think so; but you had better write at once."

"Perhaps I had better wire."

"I should say a letter would probably arrive quicker than a wire just now, and probably unopened. A wire arrives open, and is only closed in the German Post Office—*if they send it on*."

"I hadn't thought of that. Then I'd better write. I suppose I can tell her now——?"

"For God's sake, don't write telling anything to anyone in Germany. Beg her to come over at once, if you like, but give no reason. She ought to see it by now."

"But do you think they'll let her come? Hallam went on about her being a German, and having a German dowry, and money not going out of the country, and——"

"How on earth should I know?" Geoffrey said impatiently. "Write and ask her," and he took up his pen.

Colonel Armstrong, however, did not move.

"It's the devil of a mess," he said gloomily. "If there's war I shall be fighting against what that wretched name of hers makes her country, and if she's there—can't you think of *anything* —*any* way of getting at her?"

"I told you to get her away when she could have come right enough; but she wouldn't move, and now, if there's war, it's too late!"

"Then you still think there's a chance? I'm ready enough to fight Germany, once Rosamund's over here, but while she's there—it would be the very devil—she'd hear nothing, know nothing but lies, and I shouldn't hear of, or from her. Oh, confound it all, Leigh, tell me if there's a chance?"

He was walking up and down the room excitedly, and the misery in his tone and eyes got through the surface irritation in Geoffrey's tired brain.

"I can't," he said; "I don't know. The scale is just balancing; a feather's weight will turn it; the question is into which scale the feather will fall. It must fall soon. Before morning, I expect."

"Then let me wait," George Armstrong said eagerly. "I won't speak or move, if only you'll let me stop until it falls. If it's once settled, one way or the other, it will be easier to stand it. There will be nothing else to do."

"Oh, well, you can wait," Geoffrey said, "if you'll go into my bedroom and keep quiet. You'd better go to sleep."

"Sleep! That's likely, isn't it?"

"Then stop awake! Do anything you jolly well please, but don't come near me. If anything happens I'll tell you."

"Thanks, old chap: awfully decent of you. I won't stir." And so saying George Armstrong disappeared into the inner room.

The quietest hours of this August night held the great square below in their silent hands; the

faint murmur of the breeze that stirred amidst the trees of St. James's Park could not cross even the road that separated them from the wide moonlit space spreading away towards the Horse Guards Arch. For a moment Geoffrey stood at his window looking out, taking a long breath of the soft summer air. Then he turned back to his desk. George Armstrong's visit had cost him valuable time. It would mean so much docked from the four hours' sleep which was all that he anticipated. As he worked, slowly, imperceptibly, the chill that comes between the dark and dawn crept through the room.

Four o'clock struck—five—six, and as the last stroke died away the door opened and Geoffrey looked up quickly: another telegram had come. He stretched out his hand for it, tore it open and for an instant stood staring at it; the next he seized the telephone. It was *en clair* and ran:

"*From the Minister of State, Luxembourg, to Sir Edward Grey.*

"I have the honour to bring to your Excellency's notice the following facts:

"On Sunday, 2nd August, very early, the German troops, according to the information which has up to now reached the Grand Ducal Government, penetrated into Luxembourg territory by the bridges of Wasserbillig and Remich, and proceeded particularly towards the South and in the direction of Luxembourg, the Capital of the Grand Duchy. A certain number of armoured trains with troops and ammunition have been sent along the railway-line from Wasserbillig to Luxembourg, where their arrival is expected. These occurrences constitute acts which are manifestly contrary to the neutrality of the Grand Duchy as guaranteed by the Treaty of London of 1867. The Luxembourg

Government have not failed to address an energetic protest against this aggression to the representative of His Majesty the German Emperor at Luxembourg; an identical protest will be sent by telegraph to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at Berlin."*

* * * * *

The mellow light of day, already warmed by an early rising sun, showed George Armstrong sleeping soundly in an easy-chair beside the open window when Geoffrey Leigh turned the handle of his bedroom door and looked in. At the sound his guest started up.

"What is it?" he demanded breathlessly. "War?"

Geoffrey hesitated.

"The Germans have entered Luxembourg."

"Then it *is* war!"

"Possibly; there will be a Cabinet Council, I suppose."

"But, confound it, we *must* fight now!"

"And I must sleep," Geoffrey announced dryly. "If you like to ring the bell in the next room you can order yourself some breakfast. I'm about done."

George Armstrong looked at him. His thick hair was standing up all over his head, in the curious bird's-nest fashion which his habit of thrusting his hands through it when writing had always produced. He was paler than usual, and there were dark circles round his eyes, but the eyes themselves still glowed with the eager interest that had braced him through the long night hours of incessant work.

* British Diplomatic Correspondence, No. 147.

Colonel Armstrong realised that he had slept through those hours.

"I should think you were," he said, "and I've been sleeping like a hog. Well, I'll be off now. Awfully grateful to you, Leigh. You're a real good friend."

"Oh, that's all right," Geoffrey answered wearily, and as the door closed behind his self-invited guest, he flung off his clothes and throwing himself down upon his bed was asleep in two minutes.

CHAPTER IV

"L'ÂME ANGLAISE"

"Il convient de rappeler maintenant comment M. Asquith et Sir Edward Grey par d'habiles et fortes interventions préparèrent et entraînèrent l'opinion: ils la mirent à un point tel qu'elle se retourna d'elle-même quand la violation de la neutralité belge eut soulevé un litige qui ne pouvait pas ne pas ébranler l'âme Anglaise."—GABRIEL HANOTAUX: *Histoire Illustrée de la Guerre de* 1914.

THE history of the Cabinet Meeting which assembled at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, August 2, and did not disperse until two o'clock in the afternoon, has yet to be written.

The question placed before it was not yet fully revealed as that which, two days later in Berlin, Sir Edward Goschen told the German Chancellor he must understand to be the question of life and death for the honour of Great Britain. Yet to the trained sight it seemed more than probable that the violation of the neutrality of Luxembourg would not have been undertaken unless the further violation of Belgium had been decided upon. The little gateway of Luxembourg would have small value did the great gates beside her keep the railways and roads of Belgium barred. This made it vain to lay stress upon the fact that, under the Treaty of London of 1867 regarding the neutrality of Luxembourg, Great Britain had no obligation to

act save in concert with all the Powers by whom neutrality was guaranteed. Our obligations to Belgium were otherwise. There are many still who recollect how in 1870, Mr. Gladstone, when quoting the Treaty of 1839, told the House of Commons that our interest in Belgium was wider than that in the literal guarantee, and who recall the ring in his voice as he demanded whether " This country, endowed as it is with influence and power, would quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history, and thus become participators in the sin."

And now, forty-four years later, in this August of 1914, it was in reality this question Great Britain had to answer. The question of Luxembourg, which, in some eyes, seemed to limit, close, the outlook, was really vital only as evidence of that which was, it seemed, to come. Yet it is with mental vision as with physical. Some there are long-sighted, seeing clearly in the far, dim distance, yet whose thread can never pass the needle's eye, no matter how carefully they wax it. There are short-sighted men, too, who lose their glasses, thus limiting their vision to their own noses; men, also, with mental astigmatism, who can only see things at certain angles; men whose vision magnifies; men whose vision falters, fails. It were surely a superhuman task to find glasses through which all these can see the same thing in the same light; yet it is this which Cabinet Councils must attempt. Small wonder, then, that hour after hour passed by, and still

no one of all the Ministers who had gone in to take his seat at the Council Board returned from it. Outside the world waited.

It was Bank-Holiday Sunday and a fine summer morning—a day when, since the very institution of Bank Holidays, London has junketed or idled. Yet, at an early hour on this second morning in August 1914, a crowd had collected in Whitehall, whose eager, interested faces, as they watched all those who came and went across the narrow roadway of Downing Street, were assuredly not those of junketers or idlers. The first Minister who appeared was cheered vociferously; others had followed, some recognised, but one or two unrecognised, and so grievously had the crowd taken this lapse of courtesy to heart that thereafter every wearer of a high hat came and went to the accompaniment of lusty cheers. Many of them were Foreign Office messengers, who invariably wear this distinguished headgear, but to the crowd it was all one: the high hat stood, at that moment, for the Government, and they were backing that Government to stand for the honour of Great Britain. This being so, it may well be that the cheers that followed the messengers were well placed, as more than one of these carried tidings vital to that honour.

The elements of Europe were in the melting-pot, and the happenings of this day would decide whether or no the name of Great Britain would stand on the list of the potters who would mould its future shape.

Patiently, good-humouredly, the crowd waited, watching those who came and went through the doorways of the great official buildings in Downing Street: watching also the small doorway which led from the Foreign Office out on to the Horse Guards Parade. There were men in that crowd who knew what the answer given to the callers who went and came through the narrow doorway must mean to their country and to others, and who waited with fevered eyes and parched lips for the moment when the faces of Ministers leaving the Council Chamber might give them some clue whereby to find that answer. Men of all classes made up this crowd: there were those who dine at twelve and those who lunch at two; yet, if some there were whom the call of home or of the flesh-pots lured from their watch, others were ever waiting to fill, and more than fill, their places. The crowd never lessened, never wavered; it thickened, consolidated. At last the great clock of Westminster struck two, and as slowly, unwillingly, the last reverberation died away in the clear summer sunshine, the door of No. 10, Downing Street opened with the resolute air of a door which knows that its work is to remain either shut or open, not to waver to and fro as if uncertain of its duties. Breathlessly the crowd watched, cheering those who came out first, but looking ever beyond them, waiting for one man: the Foreign Secretary. They had not long to wait; with grave, set face and weary eyes he came hastily down the steps and hurried across

the road that separated the Council Chamber from the Foreign Office. A burst of cheering followed him: cheers that were forerunners of his country's confidence and trust. Beside the Park door of the Foreign Office on the Horse Guards Parade a car stood waiting, had waited for some little time. It was the car of the French Ambassador. France waited for the decision of the Council.

An hour later Monsieur Paul Cambon telegraphed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris:

"A l'issue du conseil des Ministres tenu ce matin Sir Edward Grey m'a fait la déclaration suivante: Je suis autorisé à donner l'assurance que si la flotte allemande pénètré dans la Manche ou traverse la mer du Nord afin d'entreprendre des opérations de guerre contre la côte française, ou la marine marchande française, la flotte britannique donnera toute la protection en son pouvoir."*

* French Yellow Book, No. 137, p. 143.

CHAPTER V

AT MIDNIGHT

"Une cordialité tacite naissait dans le coudoiement sans brusquerie, dans le dialogue impromptu, dans le coup d'œil échangé par les femmes qui songeaient à leurs enfants, par les hommes qui songeaient à leur pays."—MARCELLE TINAYRE: *La Veillée des Armes.*

BANK HOLIDAY dawned: blown in by gusty little squalls of wind and rain, out of season *giboulées de Mars*, fugitives from spring-time in France. On some parts of the coast a real chill came in the salt-dashed breezes from the sea, and inland there was a lack of depth in the sunshine which made holiday-makers, clad in muslin or in cotton gowns, feel that the day was all unworthy of their raiment. London was gay with these lightly and slightly clad young women, with their attendant swains. Uncertainty as to trains and eagerness for news led many either to spend their holiday in London or at least to take it on their way elsewhere. Whitehall swarmed with holiday-makers. It was the heart of London.

Our Naval Reserves had been mobilised, and men from all parts of the Kingdom were hurrying to their local railway-station, taking with them the card, issued some three years back, for use when the newspapers should announce

the calling up of the Reserves. In one corner was a small perforated circle, and this little round of cardboard was a free railway pass to the nearest seaport town, where, according to the instructions printed on the card, each Naval Reserve man must report himself at once.

Rumour was rife, running from tongue to tongue. A heavy engagement between German troops, who had crossed the French frontier near Nancy and had been repulsed by the French army with heavy losses, was reported, but unconfirmed.* Someone had heard firing in the Channel; another, when at Dover, had heard guns at Calais; nervous, or rapacious, shopkeepers had raised their prices, Bank Holiday being a favourable opportunity for such provision stores as remained open, and the Bank of England had raised its rate to ten per cent. Only two things were certain: Germany had declared war upon Russia and German troops were in Luxembourg. As the day wore on, the centre of interest changed to Westminster, where dense crowds waited for a glimpse of Ministers' faces or a whisper of the words they were speaking within the Chamber: words upon which hung the honour of their country.

It was on the afternoon of this day that Sir Edward Grey made the great speech quoted in the previous chapter: that masterly statement of the vital facts suddenly confronting us and forcing us to take our stand upon their issues, followed by that compelling call to the " deter-

* *The Times*, August 3.

mination, the resolution, the courage and the endurance of the whole country," to which with one voice, one soul and spirit, the cheers of the people gave answer.

Throughout that day and the day following, in the short roadway of Downing Street, Ministers went and came. Car after car drove under the great archway of the Foreign Office, and beside the Park entrance, opening on to the Horse Guards Parade, other cars waited, while through its narrow doorway many visitors went and came, silently, on foot.

Early on Tuesday morning the French Ambassador arrived in response to an urgent summons from Sir Edward Grey, who desired to inform him that the Prime Minister would, on the assembling of the House of Commons that afternoon, state that Germany had been requested to withdraw her Ultimatum to Belgium and to give an assurance as to respecting her neutrality similar to that already given by France.*

Quickly on his going came the Ambassadors of all the Great Powers of Europe.

The world was in travail. What would it bring forth? All day long the wires of telegraph and telephone worked ceaselessly, linking up the great minds of Europe, as the nerves of the body link its members one with the other so that they may work in unison. Again, as through the pregnant hours between the first and second days of August, it seemed to Geoffrey Leigh that, although time was all-important,

* French Yellow Book, No. 153.

hours no longer struck; their passage was printed by events.

It was nearly nine o'clock that evening when a slight lull in the pressure of work gave Geoffrey's inner self a chance to reassert itself and to remind him that, since some sandwiches hastily swallowed at some forgotten midday hour, he had had no food that day, and that it might be well to go out and look for some. He found Downing Street clear enough, as a cordon had been stretched across it; but Whitehall was a seething mass of humanity and, tall though he was, he had literally to fight his way through to the little restaurant where he proposed to dine. As he entered the small dining-room, Captain Harvey, who was sitting at a table near the door, finishing his dinner, beckoned to him to come over to his table.

"Hullo, Henry John, what brings you here?" Geoffrey asked as he seated himself and, taking up the menu, pointed to the one dish which would, he knew, be all he would have time to eat.

"I've been hanging about at the War Office all day," Captain Harvey answered. "Hallam's got a Division and—it's a deadly secret, of course, but I hope he's going to take me out as A.D.C."

"Capital!" Geoffrey said heartily. "I'm awfully glad."

"Thanks, old chap. So am I—if it comes off."

"Oh, it will come off all right; Hallam's things always do."

Henry John finished his wine reflectively.

" Any news ?" he asked.

Geoffrey shook his head.

" No, and I don't suppose there will be," he said, as he attacked a remarkably nasty-looking slice of tepid lamb flanked by two gelatinous potatoes.

" Then, that's all right," Captain Harvey said cheerfully, as he took out his cigarette-case. " No news means war—but Germany never thought we should come in."

" Do you think that's going to stop her ?"

Captain Harvey cogitated.

" I don't see how it could now," he said finally. " If a nation is taught that its army is invincible and its rulers can defy the whole world, they can't very well chuck the whole show at our bidding."*

" I don't think they will," Geoffrey said dryly.

Henry John slowly gathered his long legs out from under the little table, preparatory to getting up; he was rather like a telescope, and drew in or out according to his surroundings.

" Well, I'm going to bed," he said contentedly, as he paid his bill. " I suppose you'll be up all night ?"

Geoffrey nodded; he was eating hard.

" Rather good fun to be so close to the

* " Our policy can count on a factor of strength such as no other State possesses—on an Army whose military efficiency, I am convinced, cannot be sufficiently valued. . . . In the consciousness of being able at any time to call up their forces, our Government can bid defiance to every Power."—BERNHARDI: *Germany and the Next War*, p. 282.

engines," Captain Harvey continued. "Good-night, old chap."

"Good-night and good-luck," Geoffrey answered; and Captain Harvey, lighting his cigarette, walked leisurely across the room and out into the street.

Geoffrey Leigh was not long in following him and, as he crossed Whitehall, forcing his way with difficulty through the seething crowd, a placard in huge letters faced him—

"GERMANY DECLARES WAR UPON ENGLAND"

Apparently he had been wrong as to the manner of Germany's reply. Instead of silence came a shout of defiance.

In front of the War Office the crowd surged excitedly, shouting, cheering, singing the lusty chorus of *Rule, Britannia*, settling presently into the steadfast strains of the National Anthem, and internationalised by snatches of the *Marseillaise*, fervently sung by a strong foreign element from Soho. Flag-vendors were doing a roaring trade. Miniature flags were in great demand as buttonholes, and some ardent patriots wore them in their hats also; while the larger variety were waved violently by men, women and children, although the little hands of the latter soon grew weary and trailed their draggled bunting through the dust.

It was, however, the expressions on the faces of the crowd that caught and held Geoffrey's attention. A mob is, as a rule, moved by one

feeling and interest; eagerness, anger, fear, or some other emotion, sets on each face its impress, as by the same stamp—lightly on some, it may be, deeply on others; yet the same stamp. To-night it was otherwise. Men of all sorts and conditions were of this crowd: some had women with them; some held children in their arms, safe above the crowd. There were those who shouted, those who sang, those who were silent; and on the faces of these a great resolve was set. Some were soldiers, men whose spare, upright figures, stern jaws and steady eyes, seemed to tell of dangers met and conquered, of battles fought and won; others were clearly men of peace; yet, as their eyes read the writing on the placard, the light of war leapt within them.

Hastily Geoffrey pushed on, head down, shoulders square, forcing a pathway for himself, until he at last reached the cordon of policemen whose burly forms held the Whitehall crowds back from Downing Street and, passing through, found himself suddenly in a strange stillness. It was as if a swimmer, buffeted by a stormy sea, had been flung upon some solid stretch of shore. Quickly he turned in under the big archway and went up the steps into the long corridor that leads to the great staircase, where, until the present reign, our Foreign Ministers received the guests invited to celebrate our Sovereign's birthday. To-night the Corridor was grey and chill; no red carpet covered the pathway to the staircase; no flowers banked the walls, where,

on the birthday night, the brilliance of uniforms and orders used to vie with the brilliance of beauty, dress and jewels.

Grim and cold to-night the walls looked down on the tired, anxious faces of men working to the last ounce of their strength, and of messengers hastening to do their bidding. To the walls, however, it was all one: human beings are but a shifting shadow thrown for a moment upon their enduring surface, then passing by, fading into the dimness that holds forgotten men. Members of all the Royal Houses now at war had, at some time or another, passed through the great rooms behind them. Men change and die so quickly. Walls neither change nor die; they merely crumble, crumble slowly.

In the Corridor below to-night there was no ordered moving, at a foot's pace, of a brilliant company, waiting its turn to mount the staircase where, at the point whence it divides, turning to right and left, the Foreign Minister was wont to stand, with hand outstretched to greet them, as they passed upward to fill the great rooms and await the arrival of the Royal guests.

Movement enough there was to-night, but hasty, eager; everyone talking, questioning, surmising. As Geoffrey walked quickly down it to the room in which he was working, a dark, sleek-haired man opened the door.

"Awfully sorry I'm so confoundedly late—you must be absolutely starving," Geoffrey said

quickly; " but it's a regular fight to get through that crowd outside."

" So I should imagine from the beastly row they're making," the sleek-haired man answered. " Have they got hold of anything fresh ?"

" Oh, they've got a placard out saying Germany has declared war. I suppose there's no truth in it ?"

" I should say not, though someone was saying she had climbed down. There's a fresh rumour every minute."

" Well, we must know soon," Geoffrey said, looking at his watch. " It's nearly ten o'clock. If we don't hear in another hour it will settle itself."

The sleek-haired man nodded and passed down the Corridor in search of his long-delayed meal.

Little knots of men, most of them with telegrams, just received or about to be sent off, in their hands, gathered here and there, asking each other if any fresh news had come in. The very air breathed indefinite surmise.

Geoffrey went back to work. Things had to be done even though the message, or silence, of Germany should render them unavailing. Yet it was difficult to settle to them steadfastly. He had reawakened to a sense of time, and felt it in every nerve, as though his own blood ticked off the seconds as they passed.

The clock struck the hour. He threw down his pen and half rose from his chair; then took it up again and wrote on intermittently, half-

heartedly. From the next room the click of a typewriter jarred ceaselessly; everyone was typing in these days, no matter how exalted his position; to get the work done was the thing that mattered, not who did it. With an impatient sigh, Geoffrey wrote on; the half-hour chimed and, taking up the telegram he had just drafted, he hurried out into the Corridor, where everyone passing down it was caught for a moment in one or other of ever freshly forming, disjointed groups.

There were still some thirty minutes in which some word might conceivably come. Slowly they ticked away. Gradually the Corridor had thinned, and as the minutes passed the constant questioning had ceased, and rumours died away. To the men in the Corridor time had told his tale. In Germany midnight was drawing near.

Outside, in Whitehall, the shouts and singing of the crowd had ceased. The spell of silence holding those within had, it seemed, reached to those without, and under the clear starlit sky London listened. The last seconds dragged slowly. Impatiently men pulled out their watches, trying to count those seconds as they passed, yet unable to keep their eyes fixed upon the hands that marked them. They could only listen; and at last that for which they listened came, and one by one men counted the strokes of that hour. For the first time in history Britain reckoned by German time, and as the last echo of the eleventh hour died away men murmured, " Midnight !"

The strain was over and the day that was done for ever separated from the days to come.

* * * * *

A few minutes later a tall figure passed out unnoticed through the little Park doorway, and walked rapidly across the Horse Guards Parade to the German Embassy.

Dark and silent the house lay sleeping; but his errand did not admit of delay. He carried passports for the German Ambassador, his staff and household.

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN AND WAR

"Dans toutes les maisons de toutes les villes, ce matin là, il y avaient des femmes qui pensaient—'Demain peut-être.'"—MARCELLE TINAYRE: *La Veillée des Armes.*

"IT's all right, mother; I've got the 101st Division," Osbert Hallam said a few days later as he came into his mother's sitting-room, just as she was pouring out her second cup of tea. Lady Hallam looked up quickly and, though the slender hand that held the teapot trembled slightly in setting it back upon the tray, her voice was steady as she answered warmly:

"That is good, dear. When do you go?"

"I don't know—but any day now. Everything is kept absolutely quiet. No one knows when, or where, they cross until the last moment, I must say that the organisation of the whole thing is marvellous. I remember telling you, when I was at the War Office, that the arrangements made in 1906 gave us, for the first time, a real working and workable staff. Until then war on a big scale must have broken down the whole machinery, but you'll see all the troops will be got out of the country without a soul being the wiser. You saw that Guards battalion march past yesterday? Well, it went last night; looked as if it were just marching through the

town as usual. It went a little farther, that's all, and came upon a station and a train waiting; so it quietly entrained and went. No weeping women at the station, no farewells; and to-night another battalion will march through the same streets as the first, and the people won't know the difference."

" Only the wives and mothers," Lady Hallam said gently.

Her son crossed over from the mantelpiece, where he had been standing, and bent down to kiss her as he answered in three words:

" Poor little mother !"

Lady Hallam looked up smiling, albeit a little tremulously.

" You mustn't say that, darling. Remember what your grandmother said when my brother, an only son like you, was fighting in Zululand. ' How dare you condole with me ? I am proud to have a son to give to my country—I would send a dozen if I had them—but I give my all.' "

" I know," Osbert answered gently, " and though I'm such a rubbishy ' all,' I know you do it too. But Generals don't run any terrific risks nowadays, you know—it's not their job."

" Thank God," said Lady Hallam, with the whole-hearted sincerity and selfishness of a true mother.

Osbert laughed.

" You will enjoy hearing all your friends tell you that you don't know what anxiety is with your son always safe in the background," he said teasingly.

"I grew quite used to that," his mother answered tranquilly, "when you were on General Blinkinsop's staff in South Africa. I used to tell the dear things that when their sons had had seven wounds, like mine, they would feel, as I did, that it was only fair to give someone else a chance. It was a new idea to them."

"I expect it was, and indigestible; but most men will get their chance now."

"You—think—it will be—a long war?" his mother questioned, hesitatingly, and her eyes searched his face closely.

Osbert nodded.

"We are up against the most formidable foe we have ever met, or are ever likely to meet," he said gravely. "We shall beat him all right, but it will mean an unexampled output of force in all directions: men, munitions, money, *mind*—it's there the Germans have the greatest start of us. Their minds have been made up and trained for years, and all details resolved in readiness for the decisive moment. They always think before the event; we think after; but, thank God, we think quick, and act quick, once we start."

Lady Hallam sighed.

"Our army is so small," she said sadly.

"Yes; but it's good: a magnificent kernel round which the fruit can grow to any size. The scheme of 1906 gave us a framework which would enable us to have universal service at any moment, if only the country would stand it

—and perhaps, when the country realises what this war is, that moment will come."

"It's a last moment," his mother objected, "and perhaps too late;" but Osbert shook his head.

"Not necessarily," he said. "There is something in voluntary service, with a professional army as its nucleus, that is worth keeping. The men have a power of initiative which the perfect machinery of universal service lacks: anyhow, the country would never have accepted conscription in times of peace."

"And perhaps," Lady Hallam said slowly, "that is why to-day there is war."

"Yes; England has always flouted every teacher, save one—Experience; but that won't be remembered when demands, hitherto unthinkable, are made and can't be met. The country will clamour for someone to hang, and then damn everybody and everything, except its own crass stupidity and selfishness."

"Yes; I have often wondered how it is that there are still men who will serve England. Many of them, too, men of such private positions and possessions that place, power, money, can mean nothing to them. I have heard my mother tell how the mob broke the Duke of Wellington's windows—the man who, after Nelson, kept Napoleon out of England. They find it as easy to forget as they found it impossible to foresee themselves, and inconvenient to let others do so for them."

"And also, mother, we Britons are of a bilious temperament, due to our climate and

cookery, probably. We pride ourselves on self-criticism! It's a mere matter of manners to run down one's own possessions. Germans never do that. To a German even his own tooth-brush is better than an Englishman's."

"I thought they used toothpicks," Lady Hallam said tentatively.

Osbert laughed.

"They do; but not exclusively. We must not misjudge them! It's much better they should misjudge us and revel in all the abuse we shall heap upon ourselves. They'll believe it's all true, and a jolly good thing if they do!"

"There will at least be no clamour in Germany," Lady Hallam said. "The Government will see to that."

Her son nodded.

"Yes; when I was at Grünberg I had a long talk with a very interesting Englishwoman, whose German husband holds a big official position. She told me that in Germany it is never admitted that anything is, or ever can be, wrong in any official organisation, unless it is so rotten and corrupt that it is no longer possible altogether to conceal it. In that case the merest bird's-eye view is permitted, and then blotted out by the assurance that drastic steps for reformation have been taken, and that in future any such slip has been rendered impossible. Germany will never know that she is beaten until her land is in the hands of her enemies, and even then she will fight on. To a German his country is as his mother's womb."

"Poor people!" Lady Hallam said softly. "I do not believe that the *people* can have wanted war."

"Not an offensive war, as this is. That is why they were lied to: told that it was defensive; that the enemy was on their land, and that every man must rally round the flag to drive the invader off the soil of the Fatherland! That roped in the Socialists. I've been reading the *Vossische Zeitung*."*

Lady Hallam smiled.

"They have a great command of language," she remarked.

"Yes; and it serves them well. With the Germans words are things: they make pictures, and pictures to them are facts."

"Yes; and we wait for facts before we can see pictures, and that is why we are always late on Exhibition day," his mother answered. "At least, however, our Fleet was ready. You don't seem to count the Fleet, you know. I suppose it is because you are a soldier."

"Not count the Fleet!" General Hallam echoed. "Why, it is our very life-blood! Without it we couldn't stir; with it we are able to move our troops when, where, and how we please, and it secures our commerce and our credit."

"But why shouldn't it also destroy the German Fleet? Wouldn't that end the war at once?"

* "Under these circumstances it is the duty of every good citizen to forget all differences in Home politics, and steadfastly and resolutely come forward in defence of the threatened Fatherland."—*Vossische Zeitung*.

" Not necessarily; or, at any rate, not speedily, because Germany is so well organised that her own resources can support her for a very considerable time. But, anyhow, I don't believe the German Fleet will risk meeting ours. Bernhardi has told us that England has only two assets which the Germans fear: her Fleet and Grey—Grey has been upright and open all through. The Germans themselves recognise that his efforts for peace, the 'Greyische Auftrag, as they called them, were as sincere and self-effacing as they were far-reaching, but they met them with subterfuge and undermined them. They will attack our Navy similarly, not on the open seas, but under them, with submarines."

" I believe we can beat them," Lady Hallam said, with conviction.

" I believe we can but, thank God, the Germans don't know it."

As he spoke the door opened and Colonel Armstrong was announced.

" Hullo, Armstrong, how are you ?" Osbert said warmly, conscious that his bearing at his friend's last visit had been somewhat unsympathetic.

" Sick ! They won't let me get out; say I must stick to my billet. It's damnable !—I beg your pardon, Lady Hallam, but it really is."

'" I'm sure it is," she agreed cordially. " But sit down and I will have some fresh tea brought up. That will help you to discuss it. Please ring, Osbert."

"Thanks, awfully," Colonel Armstrong said, as he took the chair indicated. "Brooding over things does make one thirsty. Why on earth can't they find some lame or one-armed man to take my place and let me go?"

"They probably will, later on," General Hallam remarked grimly; "and meanwhile perhaps it's just as well for you not to be fighting against your fiancée's countrymen."

"They're not her countrymen! Hang it all, Hallam, you can't expect me to consider the feelings of her former husband's relations."

Lady Hallam laughed.

"It would perhaps be quixotic," she suggested; but her son persisted.

"It might make things unpleasant for her if it were known," he said, "and most things which are at all unpleasant for us do get known in Germany. She had better get out of the country first; I suppose she has now grasped why you urged her coming?"

"What's the good of that now? I can't get a wire or letter through. My last was returned to me and I haven't had a word from her since two days before the declaration of war. It's——"

"Cream and sugar?" Lady Hallam tactfully interpolated as he pulled up short in front of his adjective.

"Thanks," Colonel Armstrong said gratefully and, taking the cup and saucer offered to him, he helped himself to bread-and-butter, thereby smothering, though not suppressing, his irritation.

"But don't you think, Lady Hallam, that it's perfectly preposterous to keep a woman bound to a foreign country, just because a dead man, whom she happens to have married, belonged to it?"

Lady Hallam smiled.

"There must, I suppose, be some universal rule," she answered, "and when she is married to you I imagine that you will wish England to adopt her?"

"Oh, of course; but then, England——"

"My dear fellow," General Hallam interrupted, with a touch of that impatience which George Armstrong not infrequently provoked, "there is surely an old saying that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If a German woman marries an Englishman she becomes an Englishwoman; and if an Englishwoman marries a German she becomes a German."

"I wonder why they do it," Lady Hallam said reflectively; "I have never thought German husbands attractive."

"But, my dear mother, by the time they are husbands it's too late," Osbert objected.

"That is true; and no men, and few women, show their true selves before marriage."

"Oh, come, now, Lady Hallam, you don't think that really?" Colonel Armstrong expostulated.

"Yes, I do; but I don't mean that each intentionally deceives the other: they merely show themselves what they wish to be thought,

and what they are sure, for the future, they will be."

"Well, anyhow, I agree with you in not thinking much of Germans as husbands," Colonel Armstrong said with conviction, "although I must say Fritz von Rothenstein seemed a good chap and as devoted a husband as any woman need want."

"He's an ugly brute!" Osbert Hallam said shortly. His mother looked up quickly, but he was standing by the window, looking out, with his face turned away from her.

"Oh, well, looks in a man don't count as they do in a woman," Colonel Armstrong said placidly, "though what possessed two lovely women like Rosamund and Frau von Rothenstein to marry Germans, ugly or handsome, beats me."

"Frau von Rothenstein is very beautiful, isn't she?" Lady Hallam queried, as she poured out a second cup of tea, and the eyes she lifted to her guest, with a question as to sugar, seemed to stray for an instant to the figure in the window.

"Oh yes; an acknowledged beauty—rather too much so for my taste."

The figure in the window wheeled sharply round.

"Frau von Rothenstein is the simplest woman in the world; she hasn't a beauty air about her," Osbert said curtly.

"Oh, I didn't mean that; but there's a sort of beauty atmosphere about her. She can't

help it, of course—it just floats around; when she comes in everybody stops talking to look at her and see what she's got on."

"Well, that's their fault, not hers," Osbert interrupted impatiently.

"Oh, I said she couldn't help it—in that atmosphere, anyhow, with von Rothenstein calling her his treasure and his angel every other minute."

General Hallam turned abruptly back to the window without answering; but to his mother the slight jerk of his shoulders seemed to speak, and a hope that had lain silent, yet warmly guarded, in her heart grew faint and still.

"It is an exquisite face," she said.

George Armstrong looked up in surprise.

"I did not know you knew her."

"I don't; but I saw her picture in the Paris Salon last year and—Osbert has a photograph of her son on his polo pony and Frau von Rothenstein is holding the bridle."

"Karl is a good chap," Colonel Armstrong said warmly. "He meant going into the business, but I suppose he'll be fighting now."

"There'll be an end to the business," Osbert said, as he came back to the tea-table. "Even the most powerful machinery wants some men to work it——"

"Yes; I suppose they'll most of them be called up," Colonel Armstrong answered.

"All: before we've done with them."

"And — Herr von Rothenstein?" Lady Hallam queried.

"Oh, he's over age," George Armstrong answered.

"It will be hard for her to send her only child to fight against her own country," Lady Hallam said regretfully.

"Yes; and Karl's so English all through—such an out-and-out sportsman. Poor chap, how he must loathe this war!"

"Don't make any mistake about that," Osbert broke in abruptly. "Germany is his home, and he will fight for that home to the last drop of his blood."

"By Jove, Hallam! what makes you think that?"

"I know it," Osbert answered quietly.

"And — Frau von Rothenstein?" Lady Hallam queried.

Her son's face darkened.

"I don't know," he said dully.

* * * * *

It was late when Colonel Armstrong left and, when Osbert came up from seeing him off, he found his mother standing where he had stood, looking out over the shadowed grass and still foliage of the Square garden.

"Not gone to dress yet, mother?" he said, as he came up and put his arm round her tall, slender figure.

"No—I was thinking," she answered, as she leant back against the shoulder that, tall woman though she was, her head touched but did not overtop.

"Thinking? What about?"

"I was thinking, and wishing," she said slowly —"wishing—that I had little grandchildren here to run about the rooms and the garden, when——"

He stopped her with a kiss.

"You must not wish that, mother; you know I never wanted a woman in my life—never had time for her. If I had loved her I shouldn't have wanted to leave her; and if I had stayed with her—well, I should have been no soldier."

"Yes, dear, I know: in the early days, but now——"

"Now, mother, less than ever. You mustn't expect me to give you grandchildren, my dear. You must just make the best of me as I am. At least you will have me to yourself; no woman will ever come between us."

His lips smiled as he spoke and stooped to kiss her, but his mother was looking at his eyes. Her arms were about his neck; they held him tightly, yet—was there not now, to-night, a woman whose image stood between her and her son?

CHAPTER VII

SAMMY AND THE POTENTATE

" And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures.
. . . I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
Her palfrey bounded."
ROBERT BROWNING: *The Flight of the Duchess.*

" THERE is a person to see you, sir," Collins, Lady Hallam's old butler said, as he came deprecatingly into the dining-room on the following morning, while Osbert Hallam and his mother were at breakfast.

The General looked up quickly.

" To see me ? What sort of person ?"

"Well, sir, respectable, I should say, very; and middle-aged. I told him you were engaged, but he said he would wait. He seemed sure you'd see him—Irish I should say, sir."

" Irish ? Did he give no name ?"

" Yes, sir. Murphy—Sam——"

But Osbert's chair had been pushed back from the table, his newspaper and breakfast-napkin were on the floor and he was halfway to the door before Collins could finish.

" Sammy Murphy ! Why on earth didn't you say so ?" he said impatiently as the door closed behind him.

Collins looked reproachfully at its perfectly polished mahogany panels. He had entered Lady Hallam's service when her son was in Eton jackets and he was an excellent servant, but pompous, and rigidly imbued with the sanctity of meal-times. In his schoolboy days Osbert had nicknamed him the Potentate and the name had clung to him. With regretful dignity he picked up the newspaper and breakfast-napkin and restored them to their places.

"I am sorry, my lady, if I have made any mistake, but breakfast-time is an unusual hour for calling, and——"

Lady Hallam interrupted him. It was the only method of finishing a conversation with Collins.

"I know that, and you are quite right to wish that the General should have his meals in peace; but peace for us is over, Collins, and the General's time is not his own." She sighed and, gathering up her letters, left the room.

Collins held the door open for her and as he closed it he too sighed. He was much attached to his mistress and her son, and he had stood behind her chair during the South African War and had watched the silver streaks creep slowly through the wealth of nut-brown hair. He knew what this war would be to her.

Meanwhile Osbert had taken Sammy into his smoking-room. The man looked strangely aged and his hand shook as he took a bundle of papers out of his pocket and held them out to the General.

"You asked what brought me here, sir. If you'll be so good as to look at these, you'll see —lies, German lies," he said bitterly. "It was after horses I thought I was coming. Herr von Rothenstein told me he'd heard of a team that seemed the moral of what he wanted for Masther Charlie's coach, and they were to be a birthday present to him, and a surprise, if I found them all or nearly all they said they were. I've been to England buying horses often before, so I thought nothing of it—and I only saw my little lady just for a minute the day I was leaving. 'Give my love to my country, Sammy,' she said, Lord love her——" His voice broke, and he paused for a moment, then burst out suddenly: "And it was lies, all lies! I was to call where Herr von Rothenstein keeps his account here to ask for letters. He told me the owner of the horses would write to fix up about my seeing them, and he was very particular I should go the minute I reached London. I did that, and this is what I found"—he pushed one of the letters in front of the General as he spoke—"this letter from Herr von Rothenstein himself, telling me the horses were nothing but a mare's nest, just to get me away—away from my little lady and Masther Charlie, leaving them with nobody but a lot of Germans, damn them!"

General Hallam looked up from the letter, which he had quickly scanned while Sammy was speaking.

"But, Murphy," he said kindly, "what could you have done if you had stayed?"

"Done! Why, brought my little lady away with me," Sammy cried. "Never doubt me! I'd have found a way to steal off with her. Trust an Irishman for that!"

Osbert smiled, but there was little gladness in the smile. "Would she have come?" he asked.

"Come? and she Irish!" Sammy cried impatiently.

"But her husband, her son, are German," Osbert answered.

Murphy clenched his hands passionately.

"Masther Charlie!" he exclaimed hoarsely; "himself that I taught to ride like an Irishman. My white-headed boy amongst them black-hearted devils—fighting against Irishmen, his own flesh and blood!"

General Hallam laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Your white-headed boy will be a white-headed boy still, Murphy, wherever he is, and Herr von Rothenstein has done the straight thing by you. If you had stayed on at Grünberg you would have been interned—separated from your little lady, powerless to help her."

"He lured me away—he tried to buy me off," Murphy cried excitedly, as he flung a pocket-book on the table before the General; "but I won't take his dirty money. I've been trying to enlist, but they say I'm too old—me as can ride any horse that was ever foaled—but I'll get out somehow in spite of them, and anyhow I've got savings in a clean bank in Ireland."

General Hallam, however, had opened the pocket-book.

"These are English notes," he said quietly, "and cannot be restored to Herr von Rothenstein now. He took some trouble to settle matters for you in time. He wanted to do the right thing; that's clear, and I think you ought to let him do it."

Murphy stared at him. "The right thing!" he repeated—"to take German money the *right thing?*"

"It is not German money now, or you could not have it," Osbert answered. "Herr von Rothenstein had made it yours before war was declared. He has acted honourably in making this gift. You, too, will act honourably in accepting it, since it is given for past services loyally rendered."

Murphy hesitated.

"Is that truly your opinion, sir?" he asked.

"It is."

Murphy reflected for a moment then, suddenly, his face cleared. "Begorra! you're right!" he exclaimed. "It's better filling an Irishman's purse than a German's stomach;" and so saying, he picked up the pocket-book. He did not, however, put it in his pocket, but stood fingering it dubiously.

Osbert waited; he saw Murphy had something further to say. At last it came.

"Do you remember the day Masther Charlie brought you out to see the polo ponies?" he demanded suddenly.

"I do, well," Osbert answered, and the shadow

on his face deepened, though the scene that rose before him was set in sunshine.

"You said then, sir, that you asked nothing better than to have an Irishman beside you in a tight corner? Did you mean it?"

"Indeed I did."

"Well, then, will you be after helping me into a tight corner beside you now?"

The General smiled.

"You want to get out to the Front?"

"And where else would I want to be?"

Osbert thought for a moment. "How would you like to look after horses at the base?" he suggested.

Murphy's face fell.

"It's a fight I'm spoiling for, sir," he said ruefully.

"I know you are," Osbert said heartily, "but this war has come a bit too late for you, Murphy. Still, the man who keeps the horses fit is a Cavalry Commander's best aide-de-camp."

Murphy's face brightened.

"I can do that; no man better," he said warmly, "and I will. Get me the job, sir, and you'll never repent it."

"I'll see about it to-day," the General answered. "Leave me your address, and let me know if there is anything more I can do for you."

"Thank you, sir; but it's only a fight I'm wanting, and if you can't manage that——"

Osbert shook his head, and with a sigh Murphy

wrote down his address and handed it to him. The General put it in his pocket-book and rang the bell.

"You must have a glass of whisky before you go," he said hospitably. "Collins," he added, as the door opened and the Potentate's bald head and imposing presence appeared, "take Mr. Murphy down to the pantry and give him some bread and cheese and whisky."

The Potentate's face was inscrutable, but there was something in the increased dignity of his backbone which suggested that the hour was as unsuitable to whisky as to morning calls.

"Then, good-bye for the present, Murphy," General Hallam said cordially as he shook hands with him. "I will let you know directly I hear of anything."

"Thank you, sir; and may you find as good an Irishman as meself at your elbow the first tight corner you're in. You'll not get a better."

"I believe that, Murphy," the General said, laughing; but, as the Potentate closed the door behind his uninvited guest, the smile died on his lips and once more the shadow settled on his face.

"Her love to her country," he said aloud. "Poor soul! What is her country now?"

CHAPTER VIII

"DANS LA RUE"

"At the moment when the State declares that its life is at stake social selfishness must cease and party hatred be hushed. The individual must forget his egoism and feel that he is a member of the whole body."—TREITSCKE.

THE face of London was changed: changed as the laughing face of a girl changes, under responsibility, to grave-faced womanhood. Bank Holiday week was ended, a holiday during which the banks and Government offices had worked harder than in any week within the memory of those now working there; albeit the banks had been closed, and closed by a masterly coup which broke Germany's attempt to attack us in finance whilst getting ready to attack us in force. Every day of that holiday week the Houses of Parliament had assembled; every day had brought some weighty announcement, or pronouncement, from one side or the other, the Government being faced no longer by an Opposition but by staunch supporters. Two days after Bank Holiday the Prime Minister had announced that "Our Ambassador at Berlin received his passports at seven o'clock last evening, and since eleven o'clock last night a state of war has existed between Germany and ourselves."

The following day Mr. Bonar Law, who commenced his speech with the confession, " When this crisis arose I was one of those who had the hope that, even then, though a European conflagration took place, we might be able to stay out of it," had now " become convinced that into this war we should inevitably be drawn, and that it really was a question, and a question only, whether we should enter it honourably or be dragged into it with dishonour."*

This question had already been answered by the declaration that a state of war existed between Germany and ourselves, and the speech was a hearty " Amen " to the Prime Minister's announcement. The whole country echoed it. In Whitehall, and at every other recruiting station, a long queue waited to enlist: eagerly, patiently, doggedly; men of all sorts and conditions, of all moods and characters; boys foreswearing themselves and their birth certificates, trying to cheat the doctor, and succeeding sometimes. Men relinquishing posts which meant, if not daily bread, at least daily comforts to their dear ones. Men on whom many were dependent; men who had been dependent for so long that even love had abandoned hope of ever strengthening their feeble knees, yet who waited now, limbs stiffened, eyes alert, ready to serve at last; grave-faced men, with set, resolute eyes, knowing what they left and what they faced; joyous-eyed young athletes, to whom a battlefield seemed as a football-ground;

* Hansard, vol. lxv., 2084.

jaunty youths waving to their best girls, standing just outside the queue; sad-faced men keeping their eyes steadfastly averted from the eyes that watched them and turned only from their faces to a little head that nestled in its mother's arms. Men with set jaws, looking death in the face and never flinching; men who had never seen death, had never killed so much as a rabbit; men who realised nothing; men who realised everything.

At a moment when, under one name or another, individualism appeared to permeate all strata of society, it had suddenly, on the cleavage of the great nations of the world, merged itself in unity. Men no longer asked, "Where do I come in?" "What do I get out of this?" The Ego had become merged in the Empire. For the first time within the memory of man, far and wide, on sea and land, all eyes strained to the same goal. Other wars we have had which held the eyes and minds and hearts of, it may be, some fifth or sixth of our nation; but not since mothers hushed their babies' cries to silence by threats of "Boney's coming" has its pulse throbbed in steady unison till now. As Abel Hermant has so well said in *Heures de Guerre de la Famille Valadier*: "Aux heures pathétiques ou les hommes cessent d'être poussière d'hommes et se constituent en groupes humains, qui fait bande à part déserte. Le retranchement est un suicide. La sensibilité, la pensée même, sont communes et publiques—*Il faut descendre dans la rue.*"

In the windows of Geoffrey Leigh's sitting-room at the Foreign Office Lady Hallam stood and watched the midday crowd on the Horse Guards Parade: those waiting to enlist, those only watching. Colonel Armstrong stood beside her, and her son, a little farther back, looked over her shoulder, appraising with practised eye the physique of the ever-lengthening string.

He was to leave the following morning and had come in from the War Office to say good-bye to Geoffrey, who had suggested, in reply to his telephone message proposing this that, though he should not be in his room, tea could be there if Lady Hallam cared to come and look at the recruits and he would come in for a moment when he could. George Armstrong had come over from the War Office with Osbert, eager to lose no chance of asking whether there was no supernatural machinery which might be set in motion by the Foreign Office in order to enable Rosamund von Steinberg to cross to England.

Lady Hallam was very silent as she watched the motley crowd of men below, and watched the women who watched them: some with glad, proud faces, full of admiration of their men; some gay, laughing, enjoying the day out and feeling their young man a person of importance, an asset to the nation; some grave-faced, sad-eyed; and as she watched them, Lady Hallam sighed. These last divined what she knew, and what those other women, glad and gay, with

pride or laughter in their eyes, would learn: to wait, listening for the telegraph-boy's knock, the telephone-bell's ring, the shout of news-vendors from the street below; sick at heart for fear of what these things might tell.

Presently a voice behind her, not her son's, broke the silence.

"They ought to let us go," it said; and Lady Hallam, turning towards the voice, found herself face to face with Geoffrey Leigh. He had taken off his glasses and the dark spreading circles beneath his large grey-blue eyes made the thin, eager face look almost as if it were all eyes, she thought.

"You all volunteered, didn't you?" Colonel Armstrong queried.

Geoffrey nodded.

"We tried to, but only got snubbed and told to get on with our own work. Now we've started things all right they could quite well let us go, and we could get back in plenty of time to tidy up when it's all over."

The Hallams laughed, Geoffrey joining in, as the absurdity of his words dawned upon him.

Colonel Armstrong, however, reflected.

"If you were killed, you couldn't come back to tidy up, you know," he said consolingly.

"Then somebody else would have to do it," Geoffrey retorted. "Whatever way it's done, there's bound to be another big war in the Balkans before many years are over."

"But, my dear Geoffrey, whatever the tidying

up is there must be someone who knows how to do it," Lady Hallam said gently.

" Oh, I don't know," Geoffrey began impatiently; but General Hallam interrupted him.

" My dear Geof, what do you suppose I should feel like if my trained A.D.C. went off into the trenches and left me with a newly joined subaltern, whom I should have to instruct in the very A.B.C. of his duties, just when I'd got every nerve strained to full tension to get the better of the stoutest foe we've ever been, or ever shall be, up against? It's just the same here. From Sir Edward Grey downward, every head of a department wants to know that he can count on those under him. If he can't he will probably break under the strain. And don't you forget that your work here is, and will be, every bit as important as ours, and the man whose pen does it usefully is every bit as valuable as the man who sights his gun well."

Geoffrey's clouded face cleared.

" Thank you," he said simply; then, turning back into the room, he added, indicating a little table in the window: " Tea is here, Lady Hallam, if you will be kind enough to pour it out. I must be off."

" Oh, I say, Leigh, I wanted just to ask——" Colonel Armstrong began; but Geoffrey, having shaken hands with Lady Hallam, had turned to her son.

" Good-bye, Osbert, and good-luck!" he said warmly.

" Thanks, old chap," General Hallam an-

swered, and before Colonel Armstrong could complete his sentence, Geoffrey had gone.

"Why, what a hurry the fellow is in!" he exclaimed aggrievedly.

Osbert laughed, but his mother only smiled.

"Have some tea," she suggested, and held out a cup to him.

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

HER COUNTRY?

"You have but fed on the lilies and lain on the roses of life."—ALFRED TENNYSON: *Maud*.

THE late September sun, lavish as a millionaire who knows his days of lavishing are wellnigh done, poured down a wealth of heat and light upon the terraced walks and flower-beds at Grünberg Castle, and beat upon the *persiennes* that shaded the windows of the round dining-room, raising great green blisters on their smoothly painted surface. Within the room the tapestry-panelled walls and mirrors were all that remained to tell of what that room had been. The beautiful old gilt chairs had vanished: gone, too, was the large dining-table and in its place stood a marble slab, while beside the fireplace, leaning over a little stove, Antoinette von Rothenstein, wearing the dress of a Red Cross nurse, knelt watching a copper pan of boiling water, sterilising instruments for the surgeon who stood waiting for them at the operating-table. In here, beside the stove, the

heat was greater far than in the blazing sunshine on the terraces outside, and beneath her white nurse's cap Antoinette's pale gold hair had slipped into soft curls upon her forehead, its habitual crisp waves yielding to the atmosphere. Suddenly the surgeon turned.

"Aren't those instruments ready?" he demanded. "You're extremely slow."

Antoinette looked up; the intense heat had failed to rob her fair skin of its pallor, but the perspiration was pouring down her face.

"I'm afraid I am," she said penitently, "but I shall get more used to it soon."

"I hope so," the surgeon answered curtly, as he took the instruments she offered and Antoinette turned again to her little cauldron. She was thinner than formerly and there were dark circles round her eyes, telling of long, hard days of continuous work and short, uneasy nights of fitful sleep. Antoinette von Rothenstein had learnt what war meant in a country where every man and woman bears their share. Five days after the last of the English officers had left, she had found herself without horse, carriage, car, or cart. Not a man remained in stables, house or garden.

Sometimes it seemed to her that those days of polo-playing, those evenings when the table stretched from end to end of the great dining-hall had been crowded with guests and where, later, officers of three or four different nationalities, some in gay uniforms, others in the plain garb of immaculate evening dress, had danced

with girls and women of nationalities as diverse as their own, had been a dream: at other times it was the life of to-day which seemed a nightmare—the corpse-like forms carried on stretchers down the long marble gallery to her French dining-room; the table upon which they were laid; the blood she washed from it; the stains upon the parquet floor. Sometimes at night, under the spell of sleep, the old days came back to her; then, waking suddenly, the cold hand of remembrance, of reality, clutched at her heart, and once more she lived through the long hours of that day and night when the first wounded were brought to the hospital into which she had made her home. Some of those helpless forms, borne on stretchers across her threshold, had lain still and silent as though dead already; others there were whose heads turned painfully, restively, from side to side, with fever-distended eyes and parched lips, moaning continually, one long, low note of pain. Sometimes it seemed to her, as she followed the stretchers down the marble gallery and into the sunny, silk-panelled room where the surgeons were waiting for them, that she listened to the dirge of spirits in hell. Then, once within the room, face to face with that which must be done, all personal thought had ceased; she had become an automaton, obeying mechanically the surgeon's curt orders, fetching, carrying, standing or kneeling, hour after hour; rising early and going late to bed, working ceaselessly. It seemed to her that if she did not work she must go mad, for the

thoughts which now lay prisoned would be free.

To the very last moment Antoinette had refused to believe that war, if war there were, could separate her country from her husband's, and in this the newspapers helped her. Even so late as July 31 they had appreciated Grey's "Wohlmeinenden Vorschlag, for the preservation of peace,"* and had emphatically quoted his phrase: "England has no interests of her own at stake." It had been urged that if France agreed with England to bring pressure to bear on Russia, while Germany did the same in Austria, peace would be ensured, especially if England backed their efforts, and even so late as August 2 the financial article of the *Vorwärts* announced that "at this moment no one knows what attitude Great Britain will take up in the conflict."

This paper appeared a few hours after the German troops had crossed the frontier of Luxembourg, thereby violating the Treaty of London of 1867. To Antoinette, however, hearing only German views, limited to the range of vision furnished by German newspapers, this had seemed merely a necessary measure of self-defence. The powerful organisation which for nearly half a century had been preparing for a great European war had planned the declaration of that war dramatically.

Suddenly (in some papers simultaneously with the announcement of the entry of German troops

* *Vossische Zeitung*, July 28 and 31.

into Luxembourg which had occurred soon after dawn the previous day), throughout the length and breadth of Germany rang a clarion cry: "The Russians are in Galicia! The French are in Alsace!" Every man was summoned to drive the invaders off the soil of the Fatherland, and every man responded: every voice in the land echoed the cry. Republicans, Labour leaders, Socialists, all were roped in, and from the organs of their Press the summons pealed forth loud and full. Labour was in harmony at last with all policies and parties, knowing neither caste nor class, believing only that their country was in danger and that it lay with them to save her.

"In this crisis it is the duty of every good citizen to forget all differences of opinion with regard to internal politics, and with one accord to come forward, resolute and firm, in defence of the threatened Fatherland."*

Enthusiasm seized and held the land. Invasion by Russia had long been a nightmare, obsessing German minds by day and night. If it had to come, better now than later, for each year made Russia stronger.† Three years

* *Vossische Zeitung*, July, 31, 1914.

† "En 1917 la réorganisation de l'Armée Russe aurait été achévée; son parc d'artillere au grand complet, et un nouveau réseau de voies stratégiques lui aurait permis de jeter sur les deux Empires Germaniques des flots de combatants fournis par une population inépuisable. . . . En 1917 aussi le service de trois ans aurait donné à la France des troupes de première ligne plus nombreuses et mieux instruits."—BARON BEYENS: *L'Allemagne avant la Guerre*, p. 290

hence the reorganisation of her army would be completed, and at the same moment the French army would have been formidably increased and improved by the three years' service law. Better, then, that the trouble, since come it must, should come now. Germany was prepared, ready to spring at the throat of the great bear before its deadly grip should close upon her. Hatred of Russia had long been rampant in the land. Even in the widely cosmopolitan atmosphere of Grünberg Russians had appeared only as shooting stars, crossing its firmament, but holding no place in its constellation. Antoinette, therefore, readily accepted the newspaper assertions that Servia's attitude was due entirely to the support and encouragement of Russia, and believed their assertions that she must therefore answer for everything, since "we all know that the intervention of Russia involves France; so it is the European conflagration at last."*

Atmosphere, personal affection and antipathy, adjust the glasses through which the heads and hearts of ordinary men and women judge international events. The Austrians are an attractive people: the upper classes preeminently well bred, well dressed and well endowed with that subtle charm of manner which, like a magnet, attracts and holds those who come within its orbit. Their men, also, are true worshippers of Venus, and on her visits to Vienna Antoinette had been fêted, courted and

* *Kölnische Zeitung*, July 25, 26, and 27.

admired as a very Queen of Beauty, her grace and charm of manner, framed in her husband's wealth, opening all doors to her and making for her as many friends amongst women as amongst men. It was small wonder, then, that with the horror of the Serajevo murders fresh in her mind, impressive leading articles, such as that in the *Kölnische Zeitung* headed "Hands off," and emphasising the right of Austria to deal with Servia unfettered by the views of other Powers, impressed her, and that she never thought to question their insistence that "Every man feels it the duty of Germany to stand by Austria as in 1909 and 1912."

She remembered well how, in 1909, when war threatened between Austria and Russia, Germany's declaration that she would stand by Austria to her last horse and man had reduced Russia to quiescence. She believed that it would do so now, and her husband had tacitly encouraged her in this belief. During those restless, watchful days between the departure of their polo guests and the declaration of war, Fritz von Rothenstein had been very silent and ceaselessly busy, rarely speaking of the European situation, never unless obliged to do so.

Karl, on the contrary, had talked ceaselessly when at home, anathematising Russia, questioning of France, but never speaking of England; yet, when others spoke of her country, his eyes had sought his mother's face eagerly, though covertly. Once, looking up suddenly, her eyes had met his full; instantly his had fallen and

he had turned quickly away. At the moment the sudden pang that tugged at her heart-strings had seemed inexplicable but, later, when the German Chancellor* announced that Russia had mobilised against Germany and that the Prussian provinces were reported to be threatened by a military invasion, she had thought that she understood; for now Karl must go: this was her share in "the enormous sacrifice of blood and treasure"† which the Kaiser had told his people this war would demand. To Antoinette the sacrifice was all one; if her son were taken, henceforth all the treasure-houses of the world would stand empty for her. Yet, even then, she had not fully understood what it was that this war would ask of her.

On August 3 the newspapers proclaimed, apparently as curtain-raiser to the news of the violation of Luxembourg, that hostilities had been opened on Germany on both frontiers *without* declaration of war, "unter Bruch der Völkerrechts";‡ and the people of Germany believed them. Two days later Fritz von Rothenstein had come into his wife's room about nine o'clock, an open telegram in his hand. She had been up late the previous night playing bridge and her maid had only just called her. Through the newly opened windows the soft summer breeze stole in, lightly fluttering the muslin curtains, and an adventurous bee, intent

* *Vorwärts*, July 31, 1914.
† "Gut and Blut."
‡ *Vorwärts*, evening edition, August 3, 1914.

on honey, hummed and hovered about her dressing-table, testing the rival merits of roses ranging in hue from shell-like pink to deepest damask.

Antoinette herself, a filmy lace jacket about her shoulders and her golden head resting against a pale blue cushion, was sipping her coffee lazily, her letters and newspapers lying unopened beside her. As her husband came in she looked up smiling but, as she saw the unusual gravity of his face, her smile died away.

"What is it?" she asked quickly. "Something is wrong. Karl——" Her face blanched, and her husband interrupted her hastily.

"No, no! Karl is all right," he answered quickly as he crossed the room towards her. "But I have bad news for you, all the same, my darling."

"It cannot be so very bad," she said, with a little sigh of relief, "since you and Karl are here and well."

"Are we, then, all the world?" he asked gently as, sitting down beside her, he drew the fair head down upon his shoulder.

"All my world," she answered.

"I wonder!" Fritz von Rothenstein said slowly, with so deep a question in his voice that Antoinette sat suddenly bolt upright and looked full into his eyes.

"You wonder," she repeated. "Why, Fritz, you know—you have always known——" She stopped abruptly, her eyes fastened on the open telegram upon which his fingers had tightened

as she spoke. Imperiously she held out her hand for it. "What is it, Fritz? Show it to me. I must know."

"Yes, you must know," he said sadly; but he did not give her the telegram, and at the sound of his voice the hand stretched out for it dropped, and she waited, her eyes devouring his face, seeking there what he had to tell.

The words came slowly, painfully. "Last night, when I came in," he said at last, "you read to me an article in the evening edition of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, an article on England. It discussed England's probable attitude towards this war, and laid stress upon the fact that she was bound by no obligation or contract to take part in it——" He paused, and Antoinette waited, her eyes dilating, darkening, as she watched his face, listening. "Yesterday morning," he went on, "the British Ambassador called upon Herr von Jagow and enquired whether our Government would refrain from violating the Belgian frontier. Rapidity of action is our great asset; that of Russia is an inexhaustible supply of troops. Our plan of campaign had been made accordingly. The quick route, the route through Belgium, is vital to us. Von Jagow explained this, and added that German troops had already crossed the Belgian frontier. We could not draw back."

"And England?" Antoinette asked breathlessly.

"During the afternoon Sir Edward Goschen called again at our Foreign Office; he had

received further instructions from London——" He paused, and Antoinette, her face, always pale, now white as death, leant towards him, quivering with apprehension; but he did not speak until, gripping his arm feverishly with both hands, she demanded:

"And these instructions? What were they?"

Fritz von Rothenstein took the hands that clutched at his sleeve in his as he answered: "The instructions were," he said slowly, "that unless at midnight yesterday our Government could give the assurance that they would proceed no farther with the violation of the Belgian frontier, and we stopped the advance, the British Ambassador should demand his passports."

"And von Jagow? What did he say? Tell me—tell me quickly," Antoinette said hoarsely.

"The British Ambassador will receive his passports this morning," Fritz von Rothenstein answered slowly.

His wife's hands slipped from his listlessly, lifelessly almost; the light died in her eyes and she slipped back, away from his arm, against her pillows.

"England—and Germany," she said brokenly —"great, civilised, friendly nations! It is unthinkable, incredible—it can't be true, Fritz! It can't! It *can't!*" Once more she was sitting upright against her tumbled pillows, her eyes on his, searching them as though to learn some truth hidden in the brain behind them.

"It *is* unthinkable, incredible," he answered quietly—"the great things in life always are—but it is true."

"True?" she repeated—"*true* that there is to be war between my country and yours——"

"A woman belongs to her husband's country, mein Engel," he answered gently; "so my country is yours also."

She looked at him, her eyes wide with the question that racked her soul. "And my father?" she said.

"Your father, my darling, is Irish, and there are those who say that Ireland——"

Antoinette interrupted him. "Ireland?" she cried; "when has Ireland failed to fight for England, to win victories for England, to give to England her finest Generals?"

"That may be," her husband answered quietly; "but if your father wanted you to be English, why did he bring you up abroad and let you marry a German?"

Antoinette was silent. The answer, she knew, lay in one word, and that a word of which she was ashamed: Money. It seemed that her husband guessed what was passing in her mind and regretted what he had said. Once more he put his arm about her and drew her to him.

"My darling," he said earnestly, "you and I, and Karl also, have been caught in one of the great cataclysms of the world, and the hardest part of it is that, as regards our own lives, the outcome of it lies with you."

Antoinette's bewildered eyes questioned his. "With me?" she asked falteringly.

"Yes; with you, mein Engel. It is for you to say whether you are for us or against us."

"Against *you*—or my own country?" she cried.

"Against us—husband and son—or the country in which you were born," he answered, and bending forward he kissed her; then rose and walked towards the door.

"Fritz!" she called, "Fritz! Come back; I don't understand: I don't know what to think—to do. You say I belong to your country now, but how can I give up my own? Could you give up yours?"

He turned to face her.

"No," he said slowly, "but that is different: a man's country is the country of his fathers; a woman's that of her heart."

Then, crossing the room swiftly, he went out, shutting the door softly to behind him.

* * * * *

The hours passed on; the bees, sated with the concentrated sweetness of roses artistically massed in vases, flew away to seek vagrant scents of greater pungency in the woods and gardens, and Antoinette's maid, seated at her workroom-table, listened for her mistress's bell, and wondered that it did not ring. But Antoinette had forgotten her maid; for her, during those morning hours of sunshine, only three people existed: her husband, her son, herself.

For some moments after her husband had left her she had remained sitting bolt upright, facing the door through which he had passed, the question that her lips had asked still in her eyes. Then, listlessly, she had sunk back upon her pillows, feeling strangely tired. She tried to think, but her brain seemed numb and she lay there, idly watching the quivering leaves of a chestnut branch outside her window as the breeze fluttered in and out, threading through the twigs as dancers thread the couples in the measures of a country dance.

Suddenly she leapt to her feet; it seemed that some message had been whispered to her by the murmuring breeze amongst the leaves. This room was intolerable. She was choking for air; to be out on the wide open spaces under the sky, in the sunshine. Hastily, feverishly, she dressed and, hurrying down a side staircase leading to the garden door, she slipped out into a little rosery she had laid out behind the house and, passing quickly through it, took a winding path that led straight into the heart of the woods. On and on she sped. It seemed to her that there, behind her in the house, lay an unknown, formless monster, waiting to seize and crush her. Only out here, away from men and all they made, would she be safe.

The path she had taken turned abruptly to the right and grew gradually steeper as it turned and twisted amongst the trees, but Antoinette never paused; she was nearing her goal. Presently the dense undergrowth opened

out, the path widened and through the heavy screen of trees sunlit spaces, golden tracks of light, threw back the shadow from their massive trunks. In another moment she had reached her goal.

The path ended in a rounded knoll and away below it, beyond the massed shadow of the forest trees, the sun-swept country spread out to the horizon. It was here that Fritz, on their first coming to Grünberg, had built a little marble temple for her, so that, sheltered by its dome, she could sit looking out between its slender marble pillars from shadow into light. It had always seemed to her that out here, with nothing between her temple and the sky, she was nearer the essence of things: that in this untrammelled light truth came to her. Yet to-day a dark, cold shadow barred the light, obscuring all things. To her dulled vision the trees seemed still and dead, the smiling country hidden in a haze. She ceased to look out upon it and sat quite still, her face turned towards the entrance of the temple, but her eyes fixed upon its marble floor. Her hands were tightly locked together, and it seemed to her that by this self-grip only did she know that she was alive. Within her something lay cold and dead: something she had loved; but what this was she could not tell.

The midday sun reached its zenith, yet brought no warmth to Antoinette's chilled heart; another hour passed on unnoted and still she sat there, staring down at the white marble

floor. Then, suddenly, the vast silence of the woods was broken: a footstep sounded on the path outside. Antoinette started. It was a step she knew: her son's. She looked up; the figure hurrying towards her was that of a German officer.

With a cry she stood up.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, "we have been hunting for you for hours."

Antoinette did not answer; she was looking at his uniform.

"You—are in the German army," she said slowly.

"Why, yes, mother; you knew that!" he answered quickly.

"Yes; I knew—but I did not know—until just now, that it meant—fighting against my country."

"The country where you were born, mother," he corrected, unconsciously repeating the words his father had used a few hours back.

"And do you not consider that the country where you were born is your country?" she asked.

"Yes; because I am a man; but you, mother——"

She interrupted him. "I have always thought you English as myself," she said: "blood of my blood. You are so like me, Karl, so like me!"

Her son flushed.

"Outside, yes," he said, "but inside, no. In pleasures, sport, play, I have been all English,

and I have loved to play. No people can play as the English do; but when it comes to work, mother, I am German—German through and through."

"And you are going to fight my people," she said at last. "The people who have been your friends, who——"

"Don't, mother," he interrupted, and his voice was hoarse and broken. "Do you think I don't know? Do you think it means nothing to me? It is unthinkable, incredible—war with our cousins the English—war between England and Germany—the two nations that should stand side by side together, civilising the world! Men talked of war, but I jeered at them—such a horror could never be, I thought; yet, somehow or other, deep down within me, I have always known that if anything did—happen—I should be German."

"And I thought you all English—all mine," Antoinette said sadly, "and you never told me."

Karl flung himself on the ground beside her and put his arms about her as he answered: "Little mother, how could I tell you? What was there to tell? The feeling was buried: buried deep, deep down, so that I never remembered it was there, unless someone, digging carelessly in the sacred ground, struck one of the stones that covered it! But now—now they have scattered the stones broadcast on the earth! They have dug up my soul!"

The light of enthusiasm blazed in his eyes and he gripped his mother's hands so tightly

that she winced, although she did not try to release them.

"They have buried mine," she answered dully.

The light died suddenly in Karl's blue eyes and he dropped the hands he had held so tightly. "You feel—like that?" he said.

"I feel—dead," she answered; but Karl caught her in his arms and showered kisses on the sweet pale face.

"No, no, mother," he cried; "you are alive—living for me and for my father, as you have always lived, because you love us. Nothing can touch that."

Antoinette shuddered. "I—don't know—I don't seem able to understand," she said pitifully.

Karl sat down upon the floor beside her, and resting his head against her knee, he said gently:

"Think, little mother, if I were killed in this war, would your country be that of the men who killed me—or my country—that of the men who fought beside me?"

But Antoinette's eyes did not meet his. "I don't know—I feel—dead," she repeated.

CHAPTER II

MAMMA AGAIN

"Profitons, puisqu'il en est temps—
De cette sagesse dont l'âge
Qui vient dote notre ménage."

PAUL VERLAINE.

MRS. CROSLAND and her daughter were still at Grünberg. It would, indeed, have been difficult for them to go elsewhere, neither trains, cars, carriages or even, to any appreciable extent for private persons, tram-cars, being available, and Herr von Rothenstein was glad for them to remain. Some of Antoinette's German friends remembered too much that she was British-born while others recalled it too little.

Rosamund von Steinberg, born in a neutral country and by marriage a German subject, was an irreproachable and congenial friend for her, and Fritz, who watched his wife anxiously during the first weeks of war when she still sickened at the spectacle of civilised nations—England, her birthplace; France, the home of her childhood; Germany, the home her husband had made for her—butchering each other in the terrible machine-made butchery of modern warfare, relied on Rosamund's friendship to stand between her and needless pain.

Rosamund, however, had changed; and al-

though she helped Antoinette in arranging her hospital and worked with her in it, her help was mechanical, her work half-hearted. It seemed to her mother that from the day upon which war was declared Rosamund had been only half alive. Early on the morning of August 5 she had come into her mother's room, the daily paper in her hand, and holding it out to her had said quietly:

"You need not be afraid any more of losing me, mother. George will be fighting, and—I shall never see him again." Then she had gone back into her own room and had shut and locked the door behind her. From that day the dainty colour which made her cheeks look like opening rosebuds paled gradually and shadows gathered round her eyes; but she did not again speak of George Armstrong. It was, of course, impossible in any way to communicate with him, and as, when his last letter had reached her, his War Office appointment was still unconfirmed, she had no doubt that he had repudiated all claim to it and had gone back to his regiment, which had been one of the first to cross to France.

She worked because she must do something and workers were needed, but she put neither heart nor head into her work and Antoinette could only entrust very minor tasks to her. Her work at least served one purpose, to her a great one. It kept her away from her mother. To her surprise, Mrs. Crosland neither resented nor lamented this. She seemed, indeed, not to notice her daughter's aloofness and she herself

had made a remarkable change in the carefully ordered routine of her sheltered existence. She went out alone. This was a thing unheard of. The Swiss maid, who had been with her for more years than she would ever consent to count, and who regarded her mistress as a precious piece of porcelain to be packed in cotton-wool whenever it was moved, expostulated, coaxed, even wept, when her escort was resolutely refused and even Rosamund, whose aid she invoked, failed to turn her mother from her purpose.

"No, my dear," Mrs. Crosland remarked decisively, "it is quite useless for you and Félicie to talk to me. I know it is unusual, unheard-of, for me to go out alone; but this war is unusual. Everyone is doing unheard-of things and I do not choose to be out of the fashion."

Rosamund's somewhat limp arguments thus rebuffed and Félicie's anxiety slightly assuaged by permission to escort her mistress as far as the tramway station and to see her safe within the car—which she did with many injunctions to the conductor to take great care of the "gnädige Frau"—Mrs. Crosland pursued her purpose undisturbed. During the long, hot hours of those August days, when she had sat knitting in a garden chair out in the loggia, her brain had worked busily; and when the shorter, cooler hours of night came and the great house lay wrapped in darkness and in silence, save in those long corridors and great reception rooms

on the ground floor where shaded lights and soft footfalls told of unfailing watch kept beside the wounded, gradually the knowledge that her head had gathered had sunk into her heart, and she had learnt that hardest of all lessons for a mother: that her child suffered and she had no power of herself to relieve the suffering.

Mrs. Crosland, however, had been used to rule. She had been a beauty; she had married a millionaire, and she belonged to a land where beauty, money and womanhood know but one rival, brains; these, too, were hers. The fact that she was now in Germany, where womanhood is a poor thing apart from motherhood, and where such motherhood as hers, which had produced an only, and childless, daughter, is regarded as a stigma rather than a crown, did not greatly disturb her. She was an American citizen, and all Americans feel that to say this, nearly two thousand years after the death of St. Paul, is practically equivalent to his proud "civis Romanus sum." In any case she intended to make the best use she could of that citizenship and of all it had given her; which, incidentally, included an admirable business head and a conviction that what she intended to be done *would* be done.

She made, however, many journeys to and fro in the unaccustomed tram-car, returning so weary often that she went straight to bed, seeing no one save her devoted Félicie, who cossetted and fussed about her like an old hen whose gentle chicken has been suddenly transformed

into an adventurous duckling. Each time her maid assured her that she was killing herself and besought her to promise that this should be the very last time. The answer was always the same: a faint, indulgent smile and a gentle, affectionate caress from the slender, almost transparent, hand; then, a few days later, she would sally forth again.

Rosamund, after her initial remonstrance, neither questioned nor interfered, and Antoinette, absorbed by her hospital, took little heed of anything outside it. Herr von Rothenstein, whose habit it was to know things, was away on a mission for the Government.

Mrs. Crosland, therefore, went on her way unheeded, resolutely, patiently, albeit chafing inwardly at the great German organisation, with its astounding centralisation, whereby little real power is ever delegated locally and practically everything of importance is referred to the central authority.

At last, however, on an evening in early October when the sun, sinking slowly behind the trees of the forest, seemed to tip their leaves with gold and crimson as he passed, Mrs. Crosland stepped jauntily out of the tram-car and set off up the short bit of hill still to be climbed with unusual vigour. Passing through a little gate that led into Antoinette's rose-garden she entered the house by the side door and went straight up to the sitting-room, between her bedroom and her daughter's, which Antoinette had allotted to them. The door was ajar and,

as she pushed it gently open she saw Rosamund sitting on the window-sill, her eyes fixed on the trees outside, yet gazing at them dully, sightlessly. Her hands were folded listlessly in her lap; her whole attitude was hopeless, helpless.

Her mother crossed the room quickly and laid her hand gently on her daughter's shoulder.

Rosamund started violently. "Mother!" she exclaimed, "I did not hear you come in. You frightened me."

"Did I, dear? I am sorry," she said affectionately, putting her arm round the pretty sloping shoulders; but Rosamund moved impatiently.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," she said quickly. "Everything frightens me now. Where have you been?" She turned and looked at her mother as she spoke, and something in the eyes that met hers arrested her attention. "What have you been doing?" she asked quickly. "You—you look—successful."

"I hope so," Mrs. Crosland answered quietly. "I am going away, Rosamund."

"Going away, mother? You—going away—but where will you go? How can you go anywhere now? It's too late. And, anyhow, you can't go alone, and I—where can *I* go?"

"You certainly cannot go with me, my dear," her mother said decidedly as, sitting down on the sofa, she pulled off her long suède gloves. "I am going to England."

Rosamund's face, already pale, grew ashen white.

"To—England!" she repeated. "Going to——? You have heard something?—George——?"

"No, no! I have heard nothing," Mrs. Crosland answered hastily. "It is not possible to hear."

"Then—why are you going?" her daughter asked slowly.

"To bring back the jewels I left with my London bankers," Mrs. Crosland answered quietly.

Rosamund stared at her blankly. "Jewels?" she repeated. "JEWELS, now!"

"Well, my dear, why not? In war-time it is surely natural to think of one's most precious possessions."

Rosamund's eyes dilated; then the lids dropped suddenly as she answered.

"Yes," she said slowly, "I suppose we are all thinking of our most precious possessions." Her mother looked at her sharply, but Rosamund's eyes were fixed upon her own fingers and she did not see the love and anxiety in her mother's face. Mrs. Crosland sighed.

"Modern women are like modern soldiers," she said impatiently. "They fight without armour. Never attempt to wrestle with a German official, my dear."

Then Rosamund looked up. "Why should I?" she asked.

"You should not," Mrs. Crosland retorted; "it's the last thing you should do: he would turn you inside out in two minutes. Besides, it isn't necessary; I've done it for you!"

"You? Mother, what do you mean?" A sudden light leapt to Rosamund's eyes, her cheeks flushed and springing to her feet she laid both hands on her mother's shoulders, holding her face to face, interrogating, searching, lips and eyes. "What have you done?" she demanded.

"I have obtained a passport to go to England in order to remove my jewels from the safe of my London bankers, where I feel them to be in grave peril from invasions, Zeppelins and—oh, well, all the things, riots, revolutions, *any* of the horrible events to be expected in a country like England—and to bring them back to Germany, where, of course, they will be perfectly safe! Thank Heaven! they are mostly pearls and I can sleep in them."

"But, mother, you don't really think——"

Mrs. Crosland shook her head as she interrupted her. She felt much as a cat must feel when, having caught a mouse for her kitten's benefit, the kitten, not having previously met one, sniffs at it nervously and asks her what it is.

"No, my dear, I don't *really*," she answered mockingly, "but German officialism does—or at least pretends to; and therefore allows me the privilege of placing my treasure in its custody and, incidentally enables me to look for yours!"

"You will see George?" Rosamund said brokenly.

"That, my dear, depends upon where he is. I don't propose to follow him into the fighting-

line, but short of that I will do my best." Then Rosamund broke down and, throwing herself upon her knees beside her mother's chair, she buried her head in her lap and sobbed out incoherent words of love and gratitude.

Mrs. Crosland stroked her hair gently, waiting patiently until the paroxysm had spent itself. At last Rosamund sat up, dried her eyes, and looked at her mother as if she had never seen her before.

"I don't understand how you did it," she said at last, "and, anyway, I can't see how you can ever get to England."

"No, my dear," her mother answered placidly; "but, as I have already told you, you are a modern woman. You are altogether too capable. Men fall in love with you, but they don't want to help you. You don't seem to need it. Now I do; and they help me all the time."

CHAPTER III

THE MOVING SHADOW

"If England or France should violate the Belgian, Dutch, or Danish neutrality by sea or by land, at least Holland would join Germany.

"If the aggressor should endeavour to avoid the powerful Rhine front by marching through Belgium or through Switzerland, he would raise further enemies against himself."*—GENERAL VON BERNHARDI: *Britain as Germany's Vassal.*

ANTWERP had fallen. When Mrs. Crosland reached Flushing, where she had decided to rest for a few days before crossing to England, she found the kindly Dutch profoundly moved by its tragedy. During the days previous to the bombardment refugees had poured into Flushing. Hastily the kind-hearted hotel-keepers had flung open the hotels, a few large and many small, which occupy the entire *plage*, built for the *saison de bains*, and Mrs. Crosland had with difficulty secured a room in one of the biggest of these hotels. She found the whole of the ground floor had been turned into temporary dining-rooms, the tables consisting of wooden boards laid across packing-cases or chairs,

* General Bernhardi's opinions are interesting in view of the German Chancellor's declaration *re* the "mere scrap of paper."

amongst which the spotless white of an occasional tablecloth shone out like snow in the desert. Upon these boards were set large wooden or crockery bowls or, when these failed, tin basins, containing good though simple food, to which weary and ravenous refugees helped themselves thankfully.

The landlord of the hotel, round-cheeked, round-faced, and altogether opulent-looking, apparently designed by Nature as a signboard of satisfaction and success, glowed with anger as he spoke of the bombardment of the beautiful town, the destruction of helpless women and children, dashed to fragments by the Zeppelin bombs as they lay sleeping in their homes; of houses gutted, ground to powder; and of the misery of the town's inhabitants, driven by fire and sword from their homes. From Namur and from Liège they had poured into Maestricht, cold and starving, and now from Antwerp, down the Scheldt, the one way open to them, they were streaming into Flushing in such numbers that to feed and house them all was impossible.

"Had the Germans but waited," the little landlord cried excitedly, "had they been attacked; if France had invaded Belgium, then we would have been for Germany—but now—now that she is the invader and has destroyed Louvain, never!"

Outside the pale of Court influence this feeling seemed to prevail everywhere. Holland had seen that which was done: for her, carefully

cooked reports, editorial explanations, were as waste-paper; living illustrations of the invaders' deeds had been given to her.

* * * * *

It was late in the afternoon of the day following her arrival at Flushing, when Mrs. Crosland was lying on the bed in her room sipping her second cup of the excellent tea which Félicie had made for her, that the little maid came in, her eyes shining with eagerness, to ask if she might go down to the harbour as she had heard that great numbers of refugees were arriving. Mrs. Crosland put her second cup of tea back upon the tray untasted and sat bolt upright on the bed.

"What? Refugees from Antwerp arriving now?" she exclaimed. "Certainly we must see them. Order an auto for me at once and bring me my hat and coat."

Félicie gazed at her with eyes wide with astonishment.

"But Madame is tired," she remonstrated. "Madame——"

"Madame intends to see the refugees arrive," Mrs. Crosland interrupted. "So do as I tell you."

Félicie obeyed; it was possible sometimes to remonstrate with Mrs. Crosland, to oppose her never; and as she went downstairs the devoted little woman reflected that, amongst all the revelations of character and revolutions of habit caused by the war, it would be hard to find a more striking instance than that of the lady

she had served for more years than she ever admitted.

The auto was quickly at the door but, when Mrs. Crosland came downstairs, the sun had already sunk low enough to send vivid shafts of light through the picturesque streets, glowing softly on the slated turrets, and turning the somewhat crude tones of red and green with which houses and shutters were painted, and the softer shade of the red-tiled roofs, to rainbow hues shot through with gold—a gold borrowed from the sun himself.

Flushing is not one of the beautiful towns of Holland, but the sun, who loves vast, flat, open spaces for the setting of his good-night to earth, pours forth his glittering largesse on the spreading grass-lands, and merges the marsh and mud and sand in which they lose themselves into one great canvas on which to fling the contents of his magic colour-box. To him the soft grey mists rising from swamp and fen to meet him, as he stoops towards earth, are clouds of incense and he fills them with a golden flame.

On this early October evening herds of black-and-white cows, with placid faces and sleepy, contented eyes, were feeding lusciously on the rich grass; each one so like the other as to resemble a herd taken from a child's toy-box. Well fed, sleek, satisfied with themselves and their surroundings, they seemed typical of their country where, on most faces and in most figures, the same air of well-nourished content prevails. The spacious stillness spoke of security

and peace, and even the rhythmically moving sails of the windmills, which alone broke the smooth surface of the land, seemed to tell rather of Nature's plenty than of man's toil.

As Mrs. Crosland's auto neared the harbour, the coloured sails of boats, red, brown, and ochre, rose from the smooth grey waters of the Scheldt, while on its shore lay a dense, slow-moving shadow. The lowering sky behind this moving darkness caught the grey waters of the river whence it came, and made across them a path of copper and of crimson as of blood and fire. It seemed that the earth lay silent, waiting, watching, for the shadow to pass upon its way.

Mrs. Crosland's delicate face paled. Nearer, ever nearer, came this dense mass of inarticulate life: a life stricken dumb by misery, its movement, mechanical, hopeless though it was, its only sign of life. Even from the children came no cry; no baby whimpered in its mother's arms; no little ones prattled as they tried to make their short steps keep pace with the slow, heavy stride of the father, or grandfather, whose hands they held. Some of these men had slung the children on their shoulders, and these little ones kept looking backward, a strange look of terror in their eyes. As they drew nearer, Mrs. Crosland noticed an old priest, his pale, emaciated face framed in white hair, whose steady, even walk contrasted strangely with the uneven paces of the crowd around him. He walked bare-headed, one hand holding his hat, the other opened slightly, extended, as in appeal to God

to witness that which man had done. His eyes were fixed on the horizon. Close to him was a young woman, her masses of thick, waving hair uncovered also, her face buried in her hands, guiding her steps, it seemed, by those of the priest; behind her hobbled a very old man bent and broken, whose distorted features seemed paralysed by rage. Farther back amongst the crowd were young boys, of eight or ten it might be, looking restlessly behind them with staring eyes in which, lurking beneath the stifled rage of impotence, some nameless terror lay. In the eyes which had seen that which had been done fear ruled, but the soft lines of the childish mouths were unnaturally twisted as they tightened, hardened, and beneath a child's craving for strength dawned a man's lust for revenge.

Mrs. Crosland's thin fingers grasped her maid's arm.

"But it is horrible," she said. "They are like locusts. Where in God's name can they go? Where can they be fed—warmed?"

She looked round; beside the station stood a little inn, the only house between the harbour and the distant town, and already mothers with babies in their arms and little children clinging to their skirts, were slipping from the serried ranks, sinking down on to the soft, swampy ground, inert, helpless. Some of the younger men tried to take their children from them, but the weary arms clung to the little bundles of life they had borne so far, in silent resistance. For these luckless outcasts speech had lost all

meaning. They had learnt that only by power to hold was possession assured.

Suddenly, sharply, Mrs. Crosland spoke to the chauffeur.

"Back to the hotel," she said, "as fast as you can go."

Félicie, her bright, animated little face clouded, tears lurking behind her dark eyelashes, turned in surprise, and her mistress answered her look.

"We must get food, milk, brandy, blankets," she said, "or the poor souls will die here and now—though God knows what sort of a to-morrow we shall save them for. Still, we can't expect a miracle of loaves and fishes to-night, and if everyone takes care of to-day as to-day comes, to-morrow will look after itself."

CHAPTER IV

THE REFUGEE

"Send them away—for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them: Give ye them to eat."—ST. MARK vi. 36, 37.

IT was late when Mrs. Crosland came downstairs in search of luncheon the following morning. She had returned from her relieving expedition crushed in spirit, worn out in body. Many other cars like hers had rushed through the gathering darkness, carrying what help they could: crammed with blankets, food, milk for the babies, brandy for the sick; but, as she had said, only a miracle could have made all that could be taken sufficient for so great a multitude, and the women who had packed their cars to overflowing, and had hurried in hot haste to bring succour and sustenance to the unhappy beings thrown like seaweed on their shore, wept as they realised their impotence.

It had seemed to Mrs. Crosland, as she drove homeward through the night, that the sea of faces, white and drawn with misery, fading gradually into the gathering darkness, were drawing her towards them: downward, ever downward, to some unseen abyss of misery and pain; and when at last she had found herself back in her hotel bedroom, she saw them still.

Shivering from head to foot, she pushed away the champagne and sandwiches Félicie tried to force upon her. It was horrible that for her such things were possible, while for those out there . . . Their faces surged about her, and as she put out her light her hand trembled, for it seemed to her that in the darkness their call would grow clearer, more insistent. But the darkness is sometimes merciful, and as the fragile hand that had summoned it crept back beneath the bed-clothes those haunting faces vanished, and in a moment sleep, all-enveloping, dreamless sleep, held her safe in its keeping. She was sleeping still when Félicie crept in that morning and, seeing this, crept out again to wait silently in her own room next door until her beloved lady should call or move. Thus it had come about that when Mrs. Crosland entered the dining-room the refugees had long finished their midday meal and its only occupant was a broad-shouldered, grey-haired man seated at a table next her own upon which a snowy table-cloth was laid. His clothes were travel-stained, and the stern, sad expression of his features and the weariness in his eyes attracted her attention. It appeared, too, that he was starving. He devoured with avidity the contents of the bowl placed before him and ate bread eagerly, until the supply upon his table failed. Mrs. Crosland, to whom a roll was a meal, took up the plate that had been placed beside her and offered it to him. The stranger bowed and, rising to take it, said gratefully:

"You are very good, Madame, and you must think me very greedy; but to tell the truth, I am starving. I have come from Antwerp."

"From Antwerp!" Mrs. Crosland repeated, her eyes dilating, as suddenly the sea of white, drawn faces, which the merciful darkness had blotted out of sight and memory during the long night hours, rose once more before her. "From Antwerp? You were there when the bombardment began? It is your home?"

"It is not my home, Madame, but I was there when the bombardment commenced, and for some days previous. I had a married brother living in Antwerp. His wife is delicate and his children are little; what I heard made me fear for them, so I went to see what could be done to get them away."

"And you succeeded?" Mrs. Crosland queried eagerly.

"Yes, thank God; they left for England before the bombardment began, by the Ostend boat."

"And you?"

"I, Madame, remained. My brother is a man of business; there was much to arrange."

"Then you saw the English Naval Brigade arrive—you can tell me about it?"

The gentleman from Antwerp laid down his knife and fork and looked across at her.

"You want to know about the English Naval Brigade, Madame?" he said.

"Indeed I do; the English papers say it was a fiasco: that they were ill-equipped, useless——"

The stranger interrupted her.

"I will tell you, Madame, what the Naval Brigade were: they were a band of heroes. They were very few, but they made a—what you call devil of a row—and the Germans thought there were thousands. They took up their positions between the lines of forts and fired, and fired, while the Belgian army evacuated them."

"Then they *were* some use!" Mrs. Crosland cried. Her eyes glowed with interest, and a bright spot of colour leapt to her pale cheeks.

"Some use, Madame?" he repeated. "Do you not realise what helping the Belgian army to retire intact means? Do you know that there were some twelve thousand wounded in Antwerp and that not more than ten per cent. were left there? Do you know how when the Germans entered the town there was not a soldier to be found?"

"And you think the Naval Brigade—that little handful of men—helped in all this?"

"Madame, when you make bread you may have much dough, good dough; but it will not rise without a little cupful of yeast. The Naval Brigade were the yeast. The people—the army—were discouraged, disheartened—heavy like the dough—the Naval Brigade brought hope."

"Hope!" she repeated. "Life's mainspring."

He bent his head in assent.

"You are right, Madame. I was in the Place Verte when the British motor guns arrived: guns and soldiers; and then, thundering into the Square came omnibuses, London omnibuses,

white, red, green, labelled for Leicester Square: Piccadilly, Bank—*anywhere* but Antwerp; and out of them tumbled the British sailors. They were strong, smiling, brave; they made one feel like a plunge into salt water; the blood ran hotter in our veins, our pulses quickened; they had mended our mainspring. Hope was not dead: only sleeping; and at the tramp of those British sailors through our streets hope wakened."

"Yet it could not conquer!" Mrs. Crosland said sadly.

"At least, Madame, it saved our army from defeat," the gentleman from Antwerp answered. "Without hope, retreat is likely to become a rout. Hope brought to those who left the city, crossing the bridge of boats over the Scheldt, courage to live and fight again—to those who remained, courage to die."

"To die!" she echoed, startled by his tone and words. "But there was no more fighting after the army left. The town surrendered?"

"Yes, Madame, the town surrendered; but first many of the forts were blown up. To do this a soldier had to sacrifice himself. They drew lots. In one case it fell upon a married man, a Lieutenant; but a young fellow whom I knew, only eighteen years old, said that he, who had no wife, no child, would take his place. The Lieutenant would not agree. They disputed, until the others forced the Lieutenant away. The young man remained."

Mrs. Crosland's eyes filled with tears.

" Poor lad ! God bless him !" she said softly. " Had he a mother, Monsieur ?"

" Yes, Madame. When they told her she said, ' He did well !' "

" Your women are as splendid as your men," Mrs. Crosland exclaimed, her eyes glowing with enthusiasm.

" A man, Madame, takes after his mother," the stranger answered. But Mrs. Crosland was not thinking of heredity.

" Poor soul !" she murmured. " It is terrible, *terrible !* The mothers, children, old men and women—I have seen the refugees who came down the Scheldt from Antwerp, Monsieur, and —I shall see them always."

" I, too, Madame, shall see those who left the town with me by road," he answered gravely.

" You came by road ? But how ? Had you an auto ?"

The gentleman from Antwerp smiled.

" Practically every car in Antwerp was doing war or Government work, Madame, and any that were not were useless, as one of the military authorities' first acts was to commandeer the entire supply of petrol. I left by the Porte du Scheyn and took the route d'Eckeren."

" And you walked, Monsieur ? But how far is it ?"

" Only a good hour's walk in normal times, Madame; but walking was slow. You saw the refugees' arrival here; saw how unnumbered, innumerable, they spread across the open country, covering it as with a dense black

cloud; those came by water. I saw them start, in steamers, tugs, yachts, dredgers, fishing-boats, rowing-boats, anything that would float; but the boats could not take all, Madame, and on land there were but two ways open, westward to Ghent, north-east to Holland: two roads, Madame, for some quarter of a million human beings; roads—not open country, as where you saw them blackening the face of the earth, but roads—roads, where vehicles of every kind, drawn by horses, donkeys, dogs, oxen, cows even, jostled each other, pushing aside—crushing —those on foot. Children, women, old men, fell into the ditches by the wayside, fainting, dying. There was no shelter, no food—the country had been stripped bare. The first comers had taken all, and the people in the farms and cottages wept because they had no more to give."

"And through all this, Monsieur, you walked?"

The stranger smiled sadly.

"But certainly, Madame; I am strong, and those who were weak must either walk or fall aside to starve and die. At Eckeren, happily, I was able to hire a cart from a peasant to take me to Rosendahl on the frontier, whence I came on by train. I had to pay dear for it, but it enabled me to help many poor souls a little on their way. Men trundled their sick wives along in wheelbarrows; some of these wretched women gave birth to children in the ditches. White-capped nuns guided little flocks of school-

children amongst the maze of horses, soldiers, vehicles, as best they could, and old women with scarcely strength to hobble on yet cuddled closely in their arms a little clawing cat or whimpering puppy, their eyes wild with terror as they struggled in the kind arms that sheltered them. One I saw with a canary in a little cage, and suddenly, as the sun shone out, he began to sing, and as he sang the shouts and moans died away—the crowd listened. Then a woman sobbed, and a man shouted savagely, 'Wring the bird's neck! He mocks us!' But an old priest threw his handkerchief across the cage. 'The bird does well,' he said. 'He thanks God for the sunshine. Did it rain our case would be the more grievous.'"

Mrs. Crosland's eyes filled with tears.

"That is faith tried by fire and sword," she said.

"Yes, Madame. Behind the city, above which the spire of the cathedral soared into the sky, white, cold, beautiful and pure, the sky was one vast blazing furnace. Below, hanging densely over the town, was a black, impenetrable cloud. They had set the petrol tanks on fire. It was as if hell itself had opened to receive the invaders."

Mrs. Crosland shuddered.

"And what of the people driven out of the city, out from their homes? Could no help be found?"

He shook his head.

"I think, Madame, that surely the sound of

their crying must have reached to Heaven. Yet, as the day passed on, they grew silent, hopeless. God seemed so far away."

"I know," Mrs. Crosland answered. "Those who came from the boats were dumb."

"Yes," the stranger said slowly. "The voices of the oppressed are stricken dumb, but the deeds of the oppressors cry aloud and shall not be forgotten."

His voice trembled and, getting up abruptly from the table, he walked over to the window and stood for a moment looking out into the clean, well-kept street. Presently he turned.

"I must ask your pardon, Madame," he said courteously. "I spoke strongly; but it is my country—my people—I think you understand and will forgive me. You have been very kind."

He bowed low and, turning towards the door, before Mrs. Crosland could answer he had left the room.

CHAPTER V

MAMMA TRIUMPHANT

"Un poste dangereux était à prendre ici. . . .
Et me voici."

EDMOND ROSTAND: *L'Aiglon.*

"BUT, my dear Mrs. Crosland, you are the most wonderful woman I have ever known."

Mrs. Crosland smiled.

"Do you know, Colonel Armstrong," she replied urbanely, "it has always struck me that you don't know very much about women?"

George Armstrong, who, his face glowing with enthusiastic interest, had been leaning forward in his chair, apparently lest any word of Mrs. Crosland's thrilling narrative should fall to the ground between them, jerked himself suddenly backward. No man likes to be told that his knowledge of woman is limited. From the time a boy begins to talk he takes it for granted that he understands the entire sex, and if he has nurses they encourage him. Mothers don't mind. Some are too busy, others too wise.

Mrs. Crosland laughed.

"Don't be offended," she said quickly; "it's the thing I like best about you. Men who know least about women always make the best husbands."

"Do they?" Colonel Armstrong queried a little dubiously, but he leant forward again. It was certainly well to appear as a good husband in the sight of the mother-in-law he had selected, even though he felt it a false light.

The prospective mother-in-law nodded.

"Of course they do, and unless their wives are fools they always remain in love with them."

"I shall certainly remain in love with Rosamund," Colonel Armstrong said resolutely.

Mrs. Crosland surveyed his honest sunburnt face and straight, well-bred features critically.

"I think you will," she said, and her accent was almost affectionate. It was wonderful, she reflected, how much better she liked George Armstrong since she had done him a great service at considerable discomfort and even some slight risk to herself.

"I never shall understand how you did it," he said, surveying her much as if she had suddenly produced a bowl of gold-fish from beneath her filmy lace-edged handkerchief, or an elephant from behind her small and shell-like ear.

Mrs. Crosland smiled.

"You see, I am not a modern woman," she said softly. "Modernity is so obvious: all window-dressing; a kind of Oxford Street in Christmas week. Old-fashioned women keep their best wares out of sight, like the leading dressmakers in Paris, and only bring them out for their real customers—those who pay. Nothing is given away to the crowd, because there are no shop windows whose exhibits can be copied.'

"Well, I am bound to admit that I never suspected the treasures of your wardrobe," George said frankly; and again Mrs. Crosland smiled. He had really followed her meaning, and she was pleased and slightly surprised.

"Nor did the Germans," she said dryly.

Colonel Armstrong chuckled.

"By Jove, no!—but I don't like the idea of your going back."

"Why not? I am an American citizen."

"Yes; but you have been over here, and——"

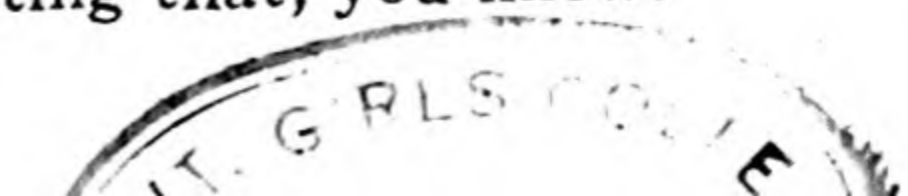
"And I have removed my pearls from the custody of my English bank and am returning with them to Germany. The wisdom and prudence of this is obvious to German eyes, whatever it may be to yours."

"Yes—that is all right if nothing else becomes obvious; but they have a wonderful knack of finding out things and——"

"They won't find this out," Mrs. Crosland said confidently.

"If they did, there would be an end of everything," George said gloomily; but Mrs. Crosland only laughed. She was in excellent spirits and delighted to find that she liked her prospective son-in-law better than she had thought.

"Don't worry," she said reassuringly. "You do your share and I'll do mine. I have promised you that I will get Rosamund out of Germany. It was my fault that the war caught her there, and I mean to make it up to you both; but I can only get her out. You've got to get her *in*, and into a country where she is an alien enemy. You keep forgetting that, you know."



"By Jove, yes! That's what Geoffrey Leigh said. I'd better go and consult him about it. It's getting on for midnight and he starts work then."

"Like an owl," Mrs. Crosland commented. "I hope he will be a wise one. Good-night. Come and dine with me again to-morrow and tell me what he thinks can be done."

After Colonel Armstrong had left her, Mrs. Crosland pulled back the curtains of her sitting-room windows, which were on the west side of the Ritz Hotel, looking out upon the Green Park. The dimmed lights and lessened traffic of war-time lent an unwonted air of seclusion, of aloofness, to the shadowed walks and wide open spaces blanched by the moonlight which threw chequered pathways through the trees on to the paths below. Through the soft night air crept the first touch of autumn's coming chill, and Mrs. Crosland drew the light scarf which had fallen from her shoulders closely round them; but she did not shut the window. She wanted to think for, lightly though she had treated it in talking to Colonel Armstrong, she knew the difficulties of the task which still lay before her.

She was, however, an American and a woman, and either one or the other could, she was convinced, cope successfully with any ordinary mortal, while the man who could effectually oppose the two combined had yet to be born. Mrs. Crosland therefore looked out into the darkness and made her plans.

CHAPTER VI

A PLEASANT LUNCHEON-PARTY

" What of the men ?
The men were bred in England.
The bowmen, the spearmen—
The lads of dale and fell.
Here's to you—and to you !
To the hearts that are true,
And the land where the true hearts dwell."

CONAN DOYLE: *The White Company* (*Ballad of the Bowmen*).

" I SHOULD not have supposed," said Gräfin von Bärenfeld as she seated herself at the Grünberg luncheon-table and resolutely attacked the first dish offered to her, " that your mother would have been strong enough for this journey to England." Her piercing eyes, beneath their somewhat shrivelled lids, devoid of eyelashes, searched Rosamund von Steinberg's face closely, and there was a twist of malice in the thin lips as she spoke. Her sharp, incisive accents arrested the attention of everyone at the table, and Rosamund felt a hot flush rising to her cheeks as she saw the eyes of the half-dozen German officers billeted in the house suddenly fixed upon her; but, before she could answer, Herr von Rothenstein's dry accents drew attention from her.

" Mrs. Crosland has gone to fetch her wonder-

ful pearls," he said, "and we all know that it is in woman's affections that her strength centres. Jewels lie very near her heart."

The officers laughed, but the thin lips of Gräfin von Bärenfeld tightened into an ugly line in the sharp, sallow face. She disliked Rosamund von Steinberg. Widows, she held, had no right to be young and slim and pretty, especially in war-time, when the male population was being ruthlessly decimated and a woman with marriageable daughters was naturally eager to see them settled before their dowries began to dwindle. True, they too might become widows, but at least her daughters would be neither pretty nor attractive: they were too well brought up. That foolish Mrs. Crosland had altogether spoilt Rosamund, and there seemed something very odd about this journey of hers to London. For a woman so easily fatigued, pretending always to be so dependent upon everybody for everything, to go off suddenly alone with her maid, at a moment when travelling was beset by innumerable difficulties and delays, seemed very curious, even if her pearls were in London; and what security was there for that beyond her word? A woman's word!—and not even a German woman's, the Gräfin reflected scornfully. Probably the whole story was a subterfuge. She recalled that in the early summer months there had been some talk of an English officer staying at Grünberg who had paid the pretty widow much attention. Was it possible that

there was an understanding between the two? That the mother was merely an emissary, the pearls a pretext? The eager light in the Gräfin's eyes hardened as, beneath their lowered lids, she watched Rosamund closely. The rush of colour to the unwontedly pale cheeks at her question had not escaped her. A pink-and-white skin was well enough for children, who could wear their hearts on their sleeves if they liked; but in grown-up women, especially widows, it struck her as ridiculous. She was not, however, disposed to regret it, since it would serve as a searchlight to her investigations. Presently, therefore, the sharp accents cut once more across the desultory talk round the table.

"What has become of all the English officers you had here for your polo week?" she asked suddenly, directing her question to Herr von Rothenstein, but glancing across the table towards Rosamund as she spoke. "And that tall dark one, who was here in the early summer —Colonel Armstrong, I think he was called. Are they all killed?"

"Probably," Herr von Rothenstein answered comprehensively, though briefly.

The Gräfin, however, persisted. "But surely I heard that Colonel Armstrong was to have a Staff appointment," she said, her eyes still taking sideway notes of Rosamund's face, in which, most disappointingly, the faint rose-leaf tint which had returned to it remained unchanged. "As a Staff officer he would, I suppose, be in little danger?"

"In England that makes no difference," Herr von Rothenstein remarked. "They let forty of their specially trained Staff officers go into the firing-line straight off, with the result that most of them were killed at Mons."

"Gott sei dank," the Gräfin ejaculated fervently. "The English are all fools!"

"But they are fine soldiers," a young, fair-haired officer seated next her broke in quickly. "I was at the front when the English came out, and I never saw anything so astounding in my life as the way in which the whole line stiffened up on their arrival. It was just as if it had got a new back-bone."

"It *had*," an older man sitting farther down the table said gravely. "I was there too. The arrival of the English was like an electric shock running from end to end of the line that faced us."*

"But they are so few," the Gräfin ejaculated.

"Yes, thank God!" There was a strange note in the words, low and fervent, that seemed to cast a spell of silence over those who heard it, and eyes sought their plates mutely. It seemed that at sound of it some picture of that battlefield had risen before them; that field whereon the line had stiffened, as he said, had been assailed, bent back, only to straighten out once more until the line facing it had in its turn yielded, bent, straightened again; *but not where it had bent*. Across that ground the other line now stretched.

* These remarks were actually made by German officers.

Suddenly Rosamund looked up, and found that Fritz von Rothenstein, alone of those seated at his table, was looking, not down upon its damask-covered surface, but across it, his gaze fixed upon the officers who had spoken. The expression on his face startled her. His eyes were filled with an unutterable sadness: a sadness as of some dread foreboding. It chilled her to the marrow. What was the secret knowledge in this man's soul which made his every word an enigma? She had often wondered what tidings had been brought to him by the managers of the works he had established in all the countries now at war. On the eve of its declaration, from France, Russia, England, these men had come, bringing with them account-books and cash-boxes. What further had they brought? They must have known much, and what they knew Fritz von Rothenstein undoubtedly knew also. Yet through all these weeks he had said no word. Those at his table talked of war; discussed and dissected the European situation; dictated the future course of events; declared and dated victory. Fritz von Rothenstein listened.

This it was that terrified Rosamund. Those who are silent hear so much, and understand that which they hear.

Had he meant a moment back to shield her or to stab? He had never, it was true, spoken to her of her engagement to Colonel Armstrong; yet, since Antoinette had known of it almost from the first, and since she never could keep

anything from her husband, Rosamund had felt sure that at first his silence had been merely in deference to her mother's wish that the engagement should not be announced until they returned to America. Later, when war with England had been declared, it would, of course, have been impossible for him to mention it. Yet his unbroken silence regarding all concerning her was baffling, stifling; everything seemed enveloped and obscured in it as in a fog. The announcement of her mother's intended journey; her departure; the news which had come, through Holland, of her safe arrival, had all been received with an automatic, though courteous, attention and assent almost repellent in their aloofness. Sometimes she had felt that all her mother's plots and plans, all her own hopes and fears, lay bare and shivering before the incisive judgment of his unerring brain; had dreaded lest suddenly his hand should seize and tear the frail web they had woven. Then, again, she had remembered the intricate and incessant work in which he was engaged for the Government, and had felt that she and her mother must to him be merely as specks of dust upon the road he had to travel. Yet to-day the question rose again within her mind, and would not be silenced. Did he know that she, his guest, was still engaged to an English officer? Did he know—— *What*, in Heaven's name, had those inscrutable eyes seen, that subtle intelligence divined? The real object of her mother's visit to England? No. That

only herself and her mother knew, or could know, and even Antoinette believed that her engagement had been broken. Drawn into the vortex of German feeling, German enthusiasm, seeing and hearing nothing outside or beyond these things, her son a German officer fighting for his country, her husband working night and day for its Government, her horizon closed by the boundaries of her home, she had taken the rupture of her friend's engagement for granted and it had been best to leave it so as the supposition simplified everything. Now, however, Rosamund asked herself whether indeed Fritz von Rothenstein had accepted this supposition. She knew that his dry, sarcastic speech often screened kindly thoughts and generous deeds. She had found him a considerate and a good friend always. Had he believed Colonel Armstrong to be dead, or had he thought that she did, or might, believe it, he would not, she felt, have spoken as he had done. Yet—how could he know to the contrary, and know that she knew, as in truth she *did* know?

It was well that Gräfin von Bärenfeld, still held by the strange spell of silence that had suddenly descended on the luncheon-party, was intent upon the chicken cutlet on her plate, for Rosamund's face blanched as she recalled her mother's telegram: the telegram that she had kissed and cried over while thanking God upon her knees as she read it; the telegram in terms arranged before her mother left, referring only to the object of her journey.

"Have found pearls quite safe," it said, "both strings."

To Rosamund that second string meant her own particular pearl, George Armstrong: George Armstrong safe in England. Now, as she watched Fritz von Rothenstein's mask-like face, the eyes half hidden and all expressionless beneath their lowered lids, she asked herself, "Could he have seen that message?" Had he, too, understood?

It was Antoinette who broke the silence.

"Modern warfare is unthinkable," she said. "In old days when men scaled heights and hacked their way into their enemy's fastnesses, grappling hand to hand, it was inspiring, chivalrous. But now, when you never see each other, when you dig yourselves into the ground like moles, and only come out to crawl like worms upon the earth, it is horrible. If it were an open encounter face to face——"

"We do sometimes meet face to face," one of the officers interrupted grimly, "but as a rule those who meet don't live long enough to enjoy the acquaintance."

Antoinette shuddered.

"Let us go into the loggia to have our coffee," she said, rising; "the sun is quite hot to-day, and we will try to forget the shadows—war and death." Her voice trembled, and the officers, led by one whom she had nursed and tended when dangerously wounded, rose and bowed their acquiescence in her wish. Gräfin von Bärenfeld, however, who had not quite

finished a particularly succulent pear, remarked sourly:

"One must face facts. They only knock you over from behind if you don't; and I really cannot see, dear Frau von Rothenstein, how, with a son fighting at the Front, you can wish to forget them."

Antoinette's blue eyes darkened and a sudden flame crept into them as she answered; but her voice was low and sweet as always.

"Can you not?" she said; "then I think that must be because you have no son."

CHAPTER VII

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

"Savantissimo Doctori—
Salut à vous qui guérissez."

PAUL VERLAINE.

MRS. CROSLAND was ill. She had accomplished her mission in England and had successfully surmounted all the difficulties of her return journey to Grünberg, with her pearls clasped tightly round her throat. They were, indeed, further secured by a small chain, and she wore them night and day. These pearls were, as she had said, of great value, and Félicie who, on previous journeys, had always been instructed to speak of them as fine imitations of those in the bank at home, was puzzled by the persistence with which her mistress now insisted upon their intrinsic worth. Mrs. Crosland had not found it necessary to inform her that she had staked greater things than pearls upon her journey.

The days she had spent in London had been anxious, eventful days, during which the tonic of excitement and adventure had kept her going, and through the slow and often interrupted journey to rejoin her daughter the whole strength of her being had reached out towards its goal: the daughter whose fair head formed for her the foreground behind which the sun rose and set.

She must get back to Rosamund. Upon this she had set her whole heart and soul. At each fresh delay she strove to be patient, calm, knowing that to fret and worry would wear away her strength so that she might break down with half her mission unfulfilled. This she could not, would not do. It seemed to Félicie, watching her anxiously, affectionately, that she could see her growing thinner daily; but all her prayers that her beloved mistress would stay and rest awhile in Holland, where Baroness von Steinberg might perhaps join her if she wished, had been made in vain. Mrs. Crosland had undertaken her journey in order to bring her pearls from London to Germany, and she intended to fulfil this undertaking faithfully. She had taken necessary risks, but she would take none that were unnecessary. Mind once more mastered matter and, at last, after days and nights of travelling, she had reached Grünberg, the shadow, as it seemed to Rosamund, of the woman who had left her but a short while back.

"Why, mamma, there is nothing left of you," she said, as she put her arms about her and kissed the thin, soft cheeks.

"Oh yes, there is," Mrs. Crosland retorted briskly, though her voice was faint and low. "I am like the lady in the comic song, my dear, whose surgeon husband persuaded her to sacrifice one limb after another to assist him in scientific investigation. She insisted, however, in retaining her tongue, and was more than a

match for him. I, my dear, have been more than a match for several surgeons;" and thereupon she had told her story, and Rosamund had laughed and cried and kissed her, and the two women had clung to one another until, suddenly, Mrs. Crosland had sunk back limp and white against the cushions of her sofa, and Rosamund, terrified as she felt the shadowy form slip from her arms, had called frantically for Félicie: Félicie, who knew just what to do, who had brought her mistress round from many faints, but who now, trying remedy after remedy, failed, and failed again.

At last she looked up, her face lined with anxiety.

"It is no use, Madame; I can do nothing more. I have tried everything; we must have a doctor."

Hastily a doctor had been summoned, and after a time he had succeeded in bringing the patient back to consciousness, but his face was very grave as he followed Rosamund from the room.

"What is it?" she asked quickly—"heart?"

"Not actually; the organ itself is not affected, but it is the nerves round the heart. Your mother has been under some severe nervous strain, combined with great—excessive—physical fatigue, and I consider her condition serious."

Rosamund grew cold as she listened. "But you don't think she will die?" she cried piteously; and the stern face to which she lifted hers beseechingly softened a little as the doctor answered:

"Not if I can help it—and I think I can."

* * * * *

During the days which followed, Rosamund found herself rigorously excluded from the sick-room, able only to listen ceaselessly at the door which separated it from hers, waiting, watching, with only a few brief mystic words night and morning from the doctor and sometimes a hopeful phrase or two from Félicie, whose obvious desire to comfort robbed her words of their meaning. If her mother were to die! This was the shadow Rosamund faced in the sunshine of her room as, her feet thrust into soft slippers lest any sound of their restless movement should disturb the patient, she paced restlessly to and fro, telling herself that if her mother died it would be for, and through, her. No trained nurse had been available, so the doctor had tried and tolerated Félicie, whom he found quick, conscientious and absolutely devoted to her mistress. He insisted, however, that his patient should see no one else, receive no letters, read no papers; and to Félicie's surprise her mistress to whom, until now, the non-arrival of a newspaper, the delay of a post, had been an intense vexation, submitted unquestioningly. Indeed, she resisted nothing; her one conscious feeling being thankfulness that there was no longer anything she must resist. Her task was accomplished and she was tired: so tired that she could think of nothing, wish for nothing, save to rest; and that she did, sleeping, dozing, and lying in that delicious stage between the two when a half consciousness seems happily aware of sleep. For her, lying

there upon the borders of sleep's world, letters and newspapers meant nothing. It seemed that, having accomplished that which she had set herself to do, her brain had stopped working and took count of nothing beyond. The doctor watched her critically, satisfied, yet puzzled; slowly the feeble pulse gained strength, the fluttering heart beat more regularly, a faint colour showed in the wan cheeks. Night after night she slept, a long, undisturbed, restful sleep; and day by day, slowly yet very surely, strength returned. The entire absence of restlessness or of anxiety perplexed the doctor in view of the nervous strain from which she was so evidently suffering and which he, naturally enough, credited to business affairs affected by the war. That was where his perplexity came in for, since the conditions war had produced grew daily worse, it seemed impossible that anxieties strong enough to induce so frail a woman to undertake so formidable a journey should have been readily assuaged. He reflected, however, that so long as his fees were paid his patient's business affairs were no concern of his, and as a patient she certainly gave him little trouble, did him much credit, and paid him handsomely. When, therefore, he at length raised the bann which had kept Baroness von Steinberg outside her mother's door, he watched her much as an artist watches the person for whom he has painted some loved one's portrait, and he positively smiled as the anxious face changed suddenly to delight and surprise

when, instead of the frail shadow that had slipped lifeless from her arms on the night of her return to Grünberg, Rosamund found, smiling at her from a background of soft-toned, deftly arranged cushions, a face that had recovered its delicate oval and out of which loving eyes, bright with returning health and vigour, welcomed her gladly.

"Why, darling! How lovely you look!' Rosamund exclaimed as she knelt beside her mother's couch.

"'Handsome is as handsome does,'" Mrs. Crosland quoted, with a swift glance that told Rosamund of what doings she was thinking: yet, scarcely had she caught it, than the graceful head turned to the ponderous form sternly erect at the foot of her bed and the sweet voice went on: "But it is Dr. Jung who has done the handsome things, my dear. I owe everything to him;" and she smiled an enchanting smile, born in the days when men were ruled by women's smiles and frowns. It was, of course, out of date in this twentieth century, and seriously out of place in Germany on the face of a woman old enough to be a grandmother; yet Dr. Jung's voice perceptibly softened as he answered:

"You were a good patient and, of course, I knew how to treat you. Had you been taken ill in England, where the doctors have no knowledge of nerves, where——" He broke off suddenly, and looked down frowning at the delicate profile resting on a great pale blue cushion. "Now, why," he demanded, "do you

always smile when I speak of nerves? Even when you were most ill I had only to mention the word and you at once appeared amused—*amused*, when nerves and their treatment are the most serious problem of the day! Yet you are an American and you ought, therefore, to know something of the subject. English people, of course, regard nerves as an affair of the imagination—or pretend they do—they are all fools; but you ought to know better."

"I do," Mrs. Crosland readily admitted, "but I can't think why you mind my smiling. Women always smile when they are pleased—just as dogs wag their tails, you know."

"And you are pleased that I have cured you? Well, you are right. Not everyone could have done it," Dr. Jung answered with conviction. He found Mrs. Crosland really intelligent, always ready to listen and to admire whatever opinions he thought fit to express; and he enjoyed expressing his opinions, so he continued complacently: "The effect of the emotions on the organs of the body is intricate. Oh, I ask no questions," he interpolated, as Mrs. Crosland seemed about to protest. "We are all in an emotional ferment nowadays, so that you, with no particular constitution and having seriously overtaxed your physical powers, collapsed utterly. The ancients were quite right when they said that the viscera, which is our stomach, was the seat of the emotions. Upset that, and you can't digest your food, or sleep, or even drink, comfortably and it's no use trying it until

the emotions quiet down and let the stomach settle. That's another word the English won't face—*stomach!*"

"Don't you think that they have faced it since the war?" Mrs. Crosland queried gently. "I should have thought that their motor transport proved that."

"Yes: damned hypocrites that they are! They don't risk their soldiers much on empty stomachs. They know well enough what would happen if they did!"

An indignant flush rose to Rosamund's cheeks, but she was looking away from the doctor, out through the window towards the garden, and her mother answered him.

"Then at least they have learnt something," she remarked thoughtfully, as one who reflects upon an unexpected improvement in an apparently hopeless case.

"Of course they have," Dr. Jung retorted testily. "The Crimea taught them the importance of transport. They face facts when they can't get behind them; but only then. Englishwomen prepare layettes for their unborn babes, but the most respectable and undoubtedly married are as insulted if you speak of them as if they weren't married at all."

Mrs. Crosland and her daughter laughed.

"And here," said Rosamund, "you drink the babies' healths at dinner months before they are born."

Dr. Jung turned indignantly towards her.

And why not?" he demanded. "If there

is any sense in good wishes at all, surely it is wiser to give them to the coming rather than to the ebbing life? And in England any dyspeptic nonagenarian will get his health drunk on his birthday, if he produces champagne to drink it in."

Again Mrs. Crosland laughed, but she saw that the doctor was getting irritated and she had no desire for a diatribe against England, especially before Rosamund. She therefore returned to his favourite subject, "Nerves."

"You face everything here," she said appreciatively, "and find out how to treat it. That is where you are so wonderful, especially in your treatment of nerves. You acknowledge their importance and diagnosis follows recognition instantly."

"Of course; if it did not, our medical science would not hold the premier position in Europe."

"When I went to Munich for the Ober-Ammergau play four years ago," Mrs. Crosland continued, "I had been for some time in England where, you know, it is considered weak and foolish for a woman to suffer from nerves, and for a man—well, he pretty well ceases to count as such. Here, however, I found an attack of nerves as readily admitted as a cold in the head and, when I wanted the porter at my hotel to look up my train, he begged me not to follow him across the hall because 'die gnädige Frau macht mir so nervös.'"

She laughed gaily, but Dr. Jung remained grave.

" Higher civilisation is accompanied by strong nerve tension," he said seriously.

" No doubt that explains it," Mrs. Crosland readily agreed. "We Americans are, of course, the most nervous people on the face of the earth. By the way, doctor, when can I go back to America ?"

Rosamund started, but her mother's arm was about her shoulders and she did not turn.

" Go back to America ?" Dr. Jung repeated. " How can you think of such a thing ?"

" I think of nothing else. It is my home, you know, and you can, I am sure, understand how, when one has been ill, near death, one longs for home." Her voice was soft, appealing, and her beautiful eyes were very plaintive as she looked up at him.

" Yes, no doubt, in ordinary times, but in war-time——"

" But that is just it," she broke in quickly; " what you said just now is so true, and it is just the emotional ferment of which you spoke that weighs upon me so terribly. Everyone here is in ceaseless anxiety. In this very house—their only son—their only child——"

Dr. Jung interrupted her.

" I have given five sons," he said dryly.

" Five !" she repeated. " Then you, too, have given all !"

" Oh, I have some girls at home," he said indifferently. " But you will understand I do not think one much to give."

"Yet it is their all," Mrs. Crosland said softly, "just as this is my all."

There was a great love in her eyes as her hand rested a moment on Rosamund's soft hair, but Dr Jung dismissed the question curtly.

"Girls, of course, do not count," he said.

Mrs. Crosland's lips parted, but closed again resolutely. She believed in the Napoleonic theory of flinging all one's forces on one portion of the position to be won and subjugating it before attacking another.

"It is well that I have no sons," she said. "I am not brave as your women are, and now that I have been so ill I can't bear to see, to think, of all the suffering all round me. Let me go back to my country, doctor! I am home-sick—terribly home-sick."

Her eyes met his beseechingly, and he wavered.

"But how will you bear the journey?" he asked; "and the sea—have you thought of that? This is no time for voyages, and you are not fit to run risks."

"I should run none," she said proudly. "I am an American."

Dr. Jung looked at her, an unwilling admiration in his hard eyes.

"You are very confident in your stars and stripes," he said, "but *la perfide Albion*——"

Rosamund moved uneasily, but her mother's arm tightened its clasp as she said quickly: "I am not afraid. For us Americans there is nothing to fear."

"You would do better to stay here," he said.

"Our German eagle can shelter you as well as your stars and stripes."

"The eagle soars high," Mrs. Crosland answered, "but not, you will admit, as high as the stars."

Dr. Jung laughed; it appeared, after all, that he was not wholly devoid of humour.

"Then you are determined to go?" he said.

"If you will help me," she answered, and the appeal in her voice was not wasted.

"I should advise you to remain with us—on earth," he said; "but, if the stars are your goal, I will see what can be done."

* * * * *

Thus it was that Mrs. Crosland initiated arrangements for her journey to America: a journey in which the state of her health made it essential that her daughter, Baroness von Steinberg, should accompany her.

* * * * *

A few weeks later Dr. Jung received a most grateful and appreciative letter from his ex-patient, dated from New York. It pleased him and he did not fling it into his waste-paper basket with most of his other correspondence but, refolding it carefully, replaced it in its envelope.

"A really intelligent woman," he reflected, "and singularly high-strung. I wonder why she invariably smiled when I mentioned nerves?"

This, however, Dr. Jung never knew.

CHAPTER VIII

HER BIRTHRIGHT

". . . Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."—EPH. v. 16, 17.

ANTOINETTE was crying: crying like a child, uncontrollably, desolately.

" I shall be all alone," she sobbed. " Karl is fighting, Fritz is always in Berlin, and now you are going to leave me: the last real friend I have;" and laying her head down on the broad sill of the bay-window where she was sitting Antoinette sobbed hopelessly.

In an instant Rosamund was on her knees beside her.

" But, my darling, everyone is your friend," she urged, her own voice trembling, her eyes full of tears. " Never was a woman loved, adored, as you are."

" No one trusts me; I feel them watching me, doubting, wondering." The words came brokenly, smothered in sobs. Then, suddenly, Antoinette raised her head and faced her friend. " The most wretched creature on God's earth," she said bitterly, " is a human being without a country."

Her tear-stained face, framed in the soft dishevelled hair, was blank with misery, and

Rosamund, her eyes held by its despair, knelt dumbly on the floor beside her. What, indeed, could she say? Where could comfort be found?

"Listen to me, Rosamund," Antoinette continued. "If you marry again—and now that you are leaving me—going back to America—to peace—leaving us at war—I suppose you will marry your Englishman. Oh yes," she continued, raising her hand in protest as Rosamund tried to interrupt, "I was a fool ever to think that you had broken with him. What Fritz said is true: where a woman's heart is, there is her country also. It is true for you, my dear, as it is true for me. Only remember, Rosamund—for God's sake, remember—what it means when the country of your heart is not the country of your birth, and never let any child of yours marry out of their own country. My father robbed me of my birthright—brought me up in three countries, loving them all, but knowing least of all my own. I called myself a cosmopolitan. I was proud to be one, to think, believe, that I belonged to all, and that perhaps I, and others like me, could draw each country a little nearer to the other. I was like Icarus: I wanted to fly to heaven when I did not even know how to walk the earth, and God has punished me. I am a pariah—I have no country, no friends. I am alone—quite, quite alone."

Once more her head sank piteously on to the cushioned window-sill, but her eyes were dry now. The paroxysm of tears had passed and her misery was dumb.

"No, no!" Rosamund cried, and she caught the little cold hands and held them closely in her warm clasp, as if she would hold them against the world. "You are not alone. You have friends everywhere: here, and in France and England."

But Antoinette shook her head.

"England?" she said sadly—"France? What welcome will either country hold for me when this war ends—if it ever ends? At the best they would but regard me as a person who has been nursing a case of malignant fever, and speak to me from a window, looking into some street far below them—if I had changed all my clothes." She smiled wanly, and the smile seemed to Rosamund sadder than her tears. Impulsively she caught her in her arms.

"That will not be so with me," she cried. "You know it will not."

Again Antoinette smiled, and this time a faint gleam of amusement tinged her smile.

"No; you will not change, I know," she said. "But then, my dear, you are an American, though you seem to have forgotten it."

Rosamund blushed.

"I—what do you mean?" she stammered.

Antoinette put her arm affectionately round her neck as she answered.

"Only, my dear, that Germany is not at war with America," she said gently.

Slowly the colour that had flooded Rosamund's cheeks faded, but she said resolutely:

"It would make no difference."

"Would it not?" Antoinette replied sadly. "Remember how things were in your Civil War. Your father fought in it!"

And Rosamund, remembering the things of which her father used to tell, was silent. Suddenly she leant forward and, taking Antoinette's face between her hands, kissed her.

"I love you and I hate war," she said vehemently. "It is ghastly, inhuman! Why does God let such horrors come?"

"Perhaps," Antoinette said slowly, "that we may redeem the time."

Rosamund looked at her, a great wonder in her eyes. She had never heard Antoinette speak like this before.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Just that," Antoinette answered—"the redemption of the time; the lives we have most of us wasted, lives that some, perhaps, have wrecked. How few of us have been of any real use in the world! We did not even understand that, since we had been sent into it, there must be some work for us to do, somewhere and how. But we didn't want to work. We just wasted our time over the worthless little things of life, and lost sight of the great things. How all one's values have changed! People want to work now as much as they wanted not to work before."

"And you think that by this work the wasted years are redeemed?" Rosamund asked.

"By work, and through suffering and death," Antoinette answered slowly. "How many lives

worse than useless, lives that have been a curse to themselves and others, have redeemed themselves in battle; how many, women as well as men, have forgotten self for their country, have learnt that the human being as a unit does not count; it is the race that matters."

"Do you think—feel that?" Rosamund asked.

Antoinette hesitated.

"I have come to know it," she said slowly, "but I cannot feel it always—not even often. Karl matters so much to me—and Fritz."

"But it would be terrible if they did not," Rosamund cried—"your son, your husband——"

"My dear, almost every man who is fighting leaves wife or mother, to whom he, perhaps, was what my dear ones are to me. None of us think of that. We are only odd pieces in the great puzzle of life that has been broken up and must be refitted somehow."

"And then?" Rosamund asked. "What then? What picture will the puzzle make?"

Antoinette shook her head.

"I cannot tell; but perhaps, if we have truly redeemed the time, it may show us a little nearer heaven, and our earth a better school to fit us for it!"

* * * * *

Three weeks later Rosamund von Steinberg and her mother sailed for America.

BOOK IV

CHAPTER I

GRAB

"And darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."—ISAIAH lx. 2.

THERE is something peculiarly gross about the heavy darkness which on moonless nights smothers the low-lying land of Flanders in its heavy pall. The dank moisture of the ground seems to rise as the darkness descends, to mingle and unite with it, so that sight and feeling are muffled, deadened. Limbs grow numb and brains begin to feel like wet blotting-paper, incapable of further absorption. There is, perhaps, nothing that deadens the soul so much as damp: the clinging, creeping chill that turns one's thoughts to worms and other crawling things, and makes a horror of night's blackness.

Yet none of these things can conquer sleep, the sleep of utter exhaustion. As a rule there is little firing at night, and even when the cloak of darkness is rent violently, jaggedly, asunder by bursting shells, men still sleep quietly in the trenches as they would sleep at home. Many even dream happily, it would seem, from the

expression on their faces and the occasional broken words they mutter in their sleep.

Young Denham, a youth with a fair-complexioned, cherubic face, one cheek bandaged up where a splinter of shrapnel had struck him, looked like a baby whom a wicked fairy had snatched from his cot and dropped into some witches' seething cauldron. An occasional shell did not disturb him or the others. Moments there are during the terrific shell fire of the daylight hours when men cry out for silence as the one need of their souls; but in the long run, by God's mercy, they grow used to it—those who do not go mad.

Guiseborough and Baby Charlton were in a dug-out whose atmosphere Baby had pithily described as chilly closeness; however, from the size and thickness of the slice of plum-cake which he was contentedly munching, it had not apparently impaired his appetite.

Guiseborough was making cocoa.

"I wish you'd hurry up with that cocoa," Baby remarked, between two large mouthfuls of cake. "If it doesn't boil in two seconds I shall have finished my cake, and food and drink, to nourish you properly, should be taken together."

"Then stop eating," Guiseborough retorted. "It's a jolly sight easier to leave things undone than to do them."

"In the matter of cake-eating, when your last meal was at some forgotten hour and sketchy at that, I doubt it," Baby answered,

looking lovingly at the reduced slice of cake in his hand.

"Well then, you come and make the cocoa boil—it takes some making—and I'll finish the cake," Guiseborough suggested.

"Thanks awfully, but do you know—it may be a vice, of course, but I've always felt that way—I have a prejudice about always finishing what I have begun." And suiting the action to the word, in two massive mouthfuls, he swallowed the remainder of the cake.

At that moment the cocoa boiled.

"Just my luck," young Charlton sighed.

"Just your greed," Guiseborough retorted.

"Well, it's much the same thing. If you're lucky things tumble into your lap; if you're greedy, you grab them."

"Grab!" Guiseborough repeated reflectively. "I say, Baby, do you remember that afternoon, the end of July, at Grünberg, when von Rothenstein began talking about grab? Baroness von Steinberg had somehow started him on States and treaties and the Lord knows what."

"No; what did he say? The Germans seem to have mastered the science pretty thoroughly."

"That's just it," Guiseborough answered. "Von Rothenstein maintained that to grab was a man's duty: that in the power to grab successfully lay the motive force of the world; that without it we should stagnate."

"Well, we've moved a bit since then," Baby answered, "and they've grabbed a bit; but I hope it will be our turn soon."

"Yes: to get back what they've grabbed and stop their grabbing for the future; but, anyhow, we didn't come out to grab as they did. I'm damned if I can see anything *we* can ever get out of all this!"

"No," Baby remarked reflectively, "but we're out not to get what we should have got if we hadn't come in and prevented them giving it to us."

Guiseborough leaned towards him.

"Say that again," he murmured entreatingly, "all of it."

But Baby shook his head.

"I don't think I could," he said frankly! "It's a bit involved, but it's what I mean."

"Well, you're about right," Guiseborough remarked thoughtfully. "If we hadn't come in, Germany would have carried through her plan all right: got to Paris, and back again to the Galician frontier ready for the Russians. Then, that little job settled up, she'd have been free to go for us next time she wanted colonies or any other little thing."

"It's queer von Rothenstein should have said that about grabbing, and queerer still that we should all have been stopping in his house within a week or two of all this. I wonder if he had any idea of it then?"

"Not of our coming in, anyhow," Guiseborough said decidedly. "After the rest of you went off to play tennis that day, he went on talking to Baroness von Steinberg. I was in the smoking-room writing, just behind them,

but not paying much attention till I heard him say that England's policy had always been to embroil other nations so that they might weaken each other while she went on growing stronger and stronger. He quoted the Bosnia-Herzegovina business and said that, after egging Russia on to fight, directly Germany nipped in and declared her intention of backing Austria through thick and thin, *la perfide Albion* backed out—as she always had done and always would do, he said. I was just going to chip in; not that I knew anything about it, but just to give him the polite lie somehow, when Hallam, whom we had none of us noticed turning over newspapers in a corner, suddenly stepped out into the veranda and put him right properly. He was at the War Office at the time of the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis, and had the whole thing at his fingers' ends."

"How did von Rothenstein take it?"

"Oh, bowed to his superior knowledge, of course. He was always courteous, you know; but when Hallam left them he said to the Baroness that, though he was a clever fellow, he did not understand his countrymen—that none of our soldiers did; for England would never fight: she would never be ready."

"No more she was, bless her! but she's fighting all the same."

"Yes; but if she had been ready there wouldn't have been a German left in France by now. Von Rothenstein said we could never look ahead, and he was right."

"Yes, damn him! I wonder what has become of his wife?"

"Poor woman! she must be having a pretty bad time anyway. I suppose Karl's fighting somewhere."

"By Jove, yes! I suppose he is. I wonder what regiment he is in. One that's fighting the Russians, I hope. He was a good chap—might have been an Englishman."

"Yes; he must feel a bit queer with his mother English, and having been to Oxford and made such heaps of English friends; more English than German for the matter of that. One can't think of him, somehow, mixed up in the things those other brutes have done."

"There's a lot of difference between their regiments," Baby answered. "Some of them seem decent enough."

"Damned few!" Guiseborough answered grimly, as he swallowed the last drop of cocoa remaining in his cup. "I'm going to sleep;" and flinging himself down, in a couple of minutes he was slumbering peacefully.

Young Charlton, however, sat on beside the table, his thoughts back at Grünberg. The damp, narrow trenches and the low, cramped dug-out no longer held him. He was out on a smooth polo-ground, galloping for all he was worth to ride an Austrian officer off the ball. How well he remembered that desperate gallop; he had just managed it, and then Guiseborough had got hold of the ball, and they had scored their goal and ended the contest for that day.

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How good the iced Bowle with peaches in it had been when they had gone into the tent and Frau von Rothenstein had made them fill a wine-glass for her to drink to the success of her countrymen, she had said. How lovely she had looked in her white gown and big picture hat—and how young! More like Karl's sister than his mother. She was a dear woman, making everyone so welcome and at home. Grünberg was just like some big English country-house: run on the same lines, and meals much the same times, except that luncheon was half an hour earlier. The food was a jolly sight better than most English country-house food, though; and that Bowle—"Success to England!" she had drunk in it that day. Poor soul! The countrymen whose health she had drunk were her enemies now. "Did she feel them that?" he wondered. Surely not. It was impossible to think of her as an alien enemy; and Karl—the best of comrades, a true sportsman, through and through; yet fighting on the other side. "I hope to God he's on the Russian front," Baby said aloud: and then, giving himself a shake, as if to rid himself of obsessing thoughts, much as a dog shakes the water out of his coat after a plunge in the river, he, too, flung himself down upon a rug and forgot everything and everyone in dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER II

HENRY JOHN

"We must take things as they come along, and keep our eyes on the ball."—RUDYARD KIPLING: *The Maltese Cat.*

THE G.O.C. of the 100th Division had come over to General Hallam's quarters and was having a long "pow-wow" with him in an inner room of the farm-house where he had set up his headquarters, while Captain Harvey, whom General Hallam had brought out with him as A.D.C., waited in what had been a pantry, but which now did duty as an office, and wrote letters. Henry John had become considerably broadened in the shoulders and bronzed in the complexion, but his countenance was as imperturbable as ever. "Harvey makes a first-rate A.D.C.," General Hallam had written home to his mother. "He always has everything ready, is never in a hurry, and his temperature is invariably normal." On this particular evening there was a good deal of correspondence to get through, and quietly, steadily, he wrote on, adding letter after letter to the pile placed ready for the field postman, and docketing and putting aside, or in some cases tearing up, those already dealt with.

Suddenly, at a slight sound outside, he looked up, and as he did so an orderly entered the room.

"A French officer, sir, has just come over from the French lines with a message from General Blanc."

"Bring him in," Captain Harvey said briefly, and resumed his writing. When he again looked up, the officer was already standing in the doorway. He was a broad-shouldered, dark man of middle height, wearing the uniform of a French Infantry regiment, bearing a Captain's *galons*.

Harvey rose and bowed.

"I understand you bring a message from General Blanc," he said.

"Yes, mon capitaine;" and taking out his message-book, the officer handed him an envelope, closed, but not sealed.

"The General is engaged just now," Captain Harvey said as he took the note, "but perhaps I can deal with it. Won't you sit down and have a cigarette?"

He held out a case to him as he spoke.

"Thank you, mon capitaine," the stranger answered; and taking a cigarette, he lighted it and began to smoke, but remained standing.

Captain Harvey, having indicated a chair, resumed his seat at the writing-table, and opening the letter, read it through carefully.

The officer watched him closely; but the bronzed, fair skin and straight features were expressionless as a wooden mask, and his eyes were bent upon the letter.

He found it interesting. It opened with a question concerning the proposed disposition of General Hallam's operating force the following day, and it seemed to Captain Harvey curious

that General Blanc should so speedily have forgotten the reply that he himself had given to a similar question when sent over to the French lines that morning; however, the General had, of course, innumerable things to keep in his head, and it was perhaps possible that he wanted the plan in writing. Yet—it seemed odd that he did not in any way refer to the morning's conversation. Captain Harvey read the letter through a second time, slowly; then turned the page, and as he did so a swift gleam leapt beneath his lowered lids. The General had asked another question: a question regarding a brigade not under General Hallam's command; this he must surely have known? Slowly, thoughtfully, Captain Harvey once again turned back to the beginning of the letter. As he did so, he heard a slight movement, the fretful, involuntary motion of shifting feet, instantly controlled. He did not, however, raise his eyes from the paper before him, but read the letter steadily, slowly through, from end to end. Then suddenly he looked up. The French officer's eyes were fixed upon him intently, searchingly, but as they met his they dropped instantly.

"I think I can answer this all right," Harvey said quietly. "Have another cigarette, won't you?"

"Thank you, mon capitaine," the officer answered, and opening the box beside him, he took one out and lighted it, while Harvey, placing the General's letter in front of him, wrote his reply. His pen ran smoothly over the paper, in clear, readily deciphered characters; once or

twice he paused, and as he did so a sharp gleam of impatience leapt in the dark eyes of the man who waited, but there was not again any sound of movement. He sat quite still. The reply was not lengthy and as Captain Harvey signed it he got up from the table, and calling "Orderly," he crossed the room with the letter in his hand. The French officer rose to meet him and as he did so the orderly came in and stood beside the door, waiting.

"I should like you to read what I have written," Captain Harvey said; "I want it to be clear."

Quickly the officer glanced down the written sheet. The French phrases told him little—nothing of what he would have known; but there, in the centre of the page, was a word that had nothing whatever to do with the French phrases or with the question he had come to ask; yet a word which to him meant everything. The letter was written in fairly correct, if somewhat laboured French, but this word was not in French. It was in a language he knew better still. It was a word that told him—— As his eye caught it he moved back swiftly, sideways, towards the door; but, while his eyes had been bent upon the letter, Captain Harvey had got up from the writing-table and was now as near the door as he was. The man saw this and, folding the paper quickly, thrust it into his tunic.

"It is quite clear, mon capitaine," he said; "I have the honour to wish you good-night."

He was standing between Captain Harvey and the light upon the writing-table and, as he

spoke and made another step towards the door of the room, the hand which had thrust the note inside his tunic fastened upon something larger, heavier. Softly, carefully, he drew it forward but, as he did so Harvey abruptly moved the lamp, turning it up suddenly, so that its light fell full upon the stranger, revealing the stealthy movement of his hand, and involuntarily the man stepped backward: at the same moment Harvey's voice rang out:

"Orderly, arrest that man!"

Instantly his arms were seized from behind, Harvey's revolver covered him, and in another second the sergeant outside had rushed in and the man was secured.

"Search him!" Captain Harvey said briefly.

The search did not take long. The prisoner knew himself surrounded, helpless, and submitted in sullen silence. In a few moments the revolver upon which his hand had closed too late, a pocket-book and a packet of papers, were taken from him and laid upon the writing-table and the man himself removed. Rapidly Captain Harvey ran through the papers; and then, more slowly, went through them a second time, placing them in order. This done, laying both papers and pocket-book on one side, he once more took up his pen.

"A little German is a useful thing," he reflected, as he resumed his correspondence. He had not, however, advanced appreciably when the sergeant returned.

"We've got him locked up all right, sir," he said.

Captain Harvey nodded. "Detail a strong guard. A brave man, desperate, will try anything, and he's brave enough. He must have known when he walked in here that he held his life in his hand."

"He had a try for yours, sir," the sergeant answered.

"But that would not have saved his," Captain Harvey objected. "The shot would have given the whole show away."

"Yes, sir; but if you'll excuse my mentioning it, I'm glad he didn't get a chance to fire that shot."

"Thank you, Brown, so am I," Henry John answered simply.

As the sergeant passed through the door Harvey heard General Hallam's voice behind him.

"Good-night, then," he said, "and to-morrow——"

"Yes, to-morrow," the other answered, and went out into the night. General Hallam turned to his aide-de-camp.

"Have you had anyone here, Harvey?" he asked. "I fancied I heard voices."

"Yes, sir; a German spy, disguised in the uniform of a French Infantry Captain, purporting to bring a message from General Blanc to ask about the disposition of our operating force to-morrow."

"Just what you saw him about this morning?"

"Yes, sir. There was, of course, a possibility that General Blanc might have forgotten some detail and wanted the whole thing confirmed

in writing; but then the letter went on to ask about the 300th Brigade, and that gave the show away. I thought he couldn't fail to know that it wasn't under your command. However, I wanted to make sure before doing anything, especially after that mistake in the 200th Division the other day, so I thought I would try and find out how much German appealed to him, and stuck an out-of-the-way German word, that had nothing on earth to do with my letter, in the middle of it, and asked him to read it to see if it was clear. That caught him, leapt to his eye. He said hurriedly that the message was quite clear, and he'd go; but—I'd called in an orderly before giving him the letter, and had him arrested, just as he was whipping out his revolver."

"You ran it too close."

"I didn't want to make a mistake, sir."

"But—well, I'm uncommonly glad you got out of it all right. Were there any papers on him?"

"Yes, sir; here they are;" and taking up the packet he handed them to the General.

Osbert Hallam looked quickly through them.

"H'm! A good thing you got him. He doesn't seem to stick at much. But you mustn't run it so close another time. Remember, I can't afford to lose you."

He laid his hand affectionately on his aide-de-camp's shoulder. Harvey flushed with pleasure. He had a warm admiration and liking for his General and these words meant much to him.

"Thank you, sir," he said simply.

CHAPTER III

BABY CHARLTON'S PRISONER

"The rockets were gold and green, sometimes, as it seemed, ringed with fire, sometimes cold like dead moons, sometimes sparkling and quivering like great stars. And with this light the whole world crackled into sound, as though the sky, a vast china plate, had been smashed by some angry god and been flung in a million pieces to earth."—HUGH WALPOLE: *The Dark Forest.*

A NIGHT black as death and silent now. All day the ceaseless roar of the relentless guns had hammered on the ears and brains of the men in the trenches, until all sense of feeling seemed driven out of them and only one desire still throbbed in every nerve—"If only they would stop! stop for one little quarter of an hour!" But they did not stop; hour after hour they thundered on, until at last the blessed darkness fell between the trenches and men thanked God that it was night.

One of the enemy's Maxim guns, very cleverly concealed, had been especially troublesome during the long hours of daylight, and when at last the blackness of the night shrouded and, comparatively speaking, silenced all things, Baby Charlton made up his mind to creep out and try to locate it.

There was some standing corn between the trenches which, cut down though it had been,

both in front of our own and the German lines, would at any rate give some cover between the two territories; and although he wished it had been cabbages or beetroots, whose dark foliage offers far better shelter to a khaki uniform than the shimmering wheat-ears, any cover was better than none. Therefore, having armed himself with three bombs, a revolver and a very serviceable aluminium-handled knife, and having warned his sergeant of his intentions, Baby dragged his long limbs out of his trench and, lying flat upon his stomach amongst the corn-stalks, commenced that slow and arduous progress which a Frenchman has aptly described as " la nage par terre."

Standing corn is ill adapted to this form of motion. It is, indeed, distinctly inimical; it impedes the swimmer and, where cut down, irritates him by perpetual pin-pricks, while, where it is not cut, it threatens with every moment to whisper warnings of his coming to the enemy. Again and again Baby paused as the wheat-ears shivered so shrilly above his head that it seemed to him the unseen enemy, to whom painfully, slowly, yet quite surely, he was drawing ever nearer, must hear and, warned in time, end his quest and, incidentally, himself.

Again and again, however, as he held his breath and listened, the chattering corn grew still and yet no sound of human stir or movement reached his strained hearing. Nearer and nearer he crept to what had seemed to him the

spot whence those deadly bullets had come. Then suddenly, close at his ear, he heard the fizz of a Verey light. Cowering closely down among the corn, he watched the dropping sparks as it soared upwards into the dense blackness of the sky. Still and silent as a corpse, his slim limbs flattened into the earth, he waited.

A second later, beneath the dense blackness of the sky, the light opened suddenly, widely, like a gigantic parachute, pouring forth a flood of dazzling radiance, white and glaring as that of the strongest electric lamp unshaded. The golden wheat-ears shone like silver in its rays; but Baby Charlton forgot to think of his dark khaki-clad limbs amongst their swaying stalks; his eyes and mind were concentrated upon a huge shell-hole close in front of him, evidently made by an eight-inch howitzer. It was from this hole that the light had come; clearly, therefore, men must be within; sent forward in order to throw up lights from an advanced post, the lines being far apart.

Yet, despite the whispers of the wheat-ears, which to his strained hearing sounded loudly, and the shimmering brightness of their raiment in the vivid light, it seemed that the enemy had so far neither heard nor seen him. He knew that his own nervous tension must magnify each sound a hundredfold. It might, therefore, still be possible for him to return safely to his trench. This procedure, however, found no favour in his eyes. Half-finished jobs were, he held, as rotten as half-hatched eggs. He there-

fore determined to stick it out. The regiment in the trenches facing them had been changed a day or two back, as had been announced by an unusual hubbub and the jocular invitations shouted to them, in varying forms of the English language, to "Come over here and see your vriends," "We are all your vriends," "Come and see," etc. It would be highly desirable to find out what this regiment was, if he could not get the machine-gun located. Baby therefore lay doggo, waiting and listening for another "Fiz-z-z" of a second Verey light.

The night was damp and chilly, and as he lay hugging the clammy ground so closely that it seemed to him as if it must hold him glued there, a prisoner of the soil, the darkness, denser, deeper now, to eyes dazzled by the luminous radiance of the bursting light, appeared to drop suddenly like a pall, as though it would smother, suffocate, those on the earth beneath.

The damp, nauseous air penetrated his lungs and limbs. "Worse than sitting in a bog waiting for snipe," he thought. "Tricky birds, too, snipe. Give one real good sport, though, while this business——" Suddenly from the shell-hole in front of him came again the long warning "Fiz-z-z." Snipe were forgotten: alert, yet still as stone, he watched the dropping sparks as the rocket tore its way upward; any chance he might have would come now. With one of his three bombs poised in his hand, he watched and waited, until once more the enveloping darkness was driven back by a glare

that seemed to search the very fibre of the torn-up earth about the shell-hole, piercing its depths, and illuminating dark figures crouched therein: blinding them, it seemed, since none stirred or sought to see that which might lie outside amongst the corn. Yet surely in another moment they must see—must—well, it didn't matter what they did. He had got to time his bomb very carefully.

Yes! He had got it! His bomb exploded right at the mouth of the shell-hole, and out of it, like rabbits from a warren, four or five figures scuttled, making for a ditch leading back to their trenches. His bomb had failed to stop them as, indeed, he had expected, given the uncertainty of light and the difficulty of aim. He had had a poor show for his pains: nothing had come of it. He had, it is true, routed the enemy out of their cover but, as he had been unable to see any distinguishing mark on their uniforms, and as he did not even know if all the occupants of the shell-hole had left it, not much had been gained. He must wait a bit longer. He could not well be stiffer or colder, and something might turn up, after all. So he lay still, flat and cold upon the damp earth, watching, listening. Ah! there it was again—"Fizz-z-z"; and as the parachute of light once more opened out, flooding the earth, he saw, in front of the shell-hole, a figure much like his own, but grey-clad, lying, as he was lying, still as death upon the ground. When the last light had blazed out, giving him his aim for his bomb,

this figure had not been there. Clearly, then, this death-like stillness was feigned, even as his own; for had the bomb reached and killed him he would still have been in the shell-hole, not out here in the open, watching him, he supposed, as he himself watched, like a tiger waiting for his chance to spring. As the light vanished, Baby Charlton, who had lost his revolver whilst creeping about on the sodden ground, leapt forward in the direction where that dark figure had lain, and it seemed the figure leapt simultaneously to meet him. A shot rang out, but in the darkness missed its aim, and before the German could fire again, Baby Charlton was on him. Strong in muscle, despite his slender build, he felt, as he closed with the grey-clad form, that he had found a man strong and resolute as himself. In the darkness each struggled to get power to use his knife, but vainly. To and fro they swayed, the advantage turning slightly, yet never decisively, first one way and then the other. At last the German, with a sudden turn, wrenched his right arm free, and his hand went straight to his knife; but Baby Charlton, throwing all his weight upon him, forced him back and, as he drew his knife, he slipped up, on the clammy, greasy soil, and fell, dragging Baby down with him, but uppermost, and in another moment his knee was on the German's chest.

The man writhed, gasping, muttering.

"Damn that slush!" he said.

Baby Charlton's hand, clutching the aluminium handle of his knife, recoiled: a sudden involun-

tary recoil. English words; English voice—a voice he knew.

"Who are you?" he demanded hoarsely.

"An enemy."

"And an Englishman?"

"By God, no! a German."

Baby's hand clenched upon his knife-handle. It was his duty to kill this man, since to drag him back as prisoner was practically impossible; yet words, voice, accent, had shaken his resolve.

"Will you surrender?" he asked curtly.

"No, I'm damned if I will!" the grey figure answered, struggling violently to writhe away from the knees and hand that held him prisoner; but the grip tightened. Not in vain had Baby Charlton fenced and boxed at Eton: with a sudden swift blow under his chin, his English-speaking enemy was knocked senseless.

"Well, I'm damned!" Baby muttered to himself, as the figure ceased struggling and the head fell back on to the sticky ground which their struggle had churned into slush. He felt that the position in which he had landed himself was not only one of some difficulty, but essentially stupid. It was evident that he could not alone convey his insensible prisoner back to the British trenches. He might drag him some way towards them, but that ultimately he would have to get help from his sergeant seemed certain, and to return from a reconnoitring expedition, such as he had attempted, with a prisoner who had refused to surrender was clearly unnecessary. Thinking about the matter, how-

ever, did not make it any the easier to carry through. So, painfully and laboriously, Baby Charlton once more started on his "nage par terre" back to the British lines, dragging his inanimate grey-coated captive by the shoulders.

It was no easy task; the ground was as holding as a ploughed field during a wet winter in the Midlands, and it seemed to him that the distance between the trenches had trebled and quadrupled since he had started out. His prisoner, clad in a heavy uniform, and with the dead weight of insensibility, seemed a figure of iron sinking down into the soft ground; but Baby Charlton was strong and resolute, and he had managed to drag his prisoner pretty near to his own trench before he went for assistance. When, however, the grey-coated figure had been lifted down into the trench and deposited in a dug-out, Baby sat down beside him and panted. Presently, having recovered his wind, he bent over his prisoner, trying hard to scan his face in the faint light, to learn whence the sense of familiarity in voice and tone had come. The features, however, were swollen, the cheeks caked with mud. Only a tiny patch of white skin close to the fair hair which, close-shaven though it was, yet showed so resolute a wave, seemed to recall something, someone. But what? Whom? Was the memory it brought that of man or woman? Both seemed to float before his eyes, but with veiled faces; outlines that he knew, but could not name.

Suddenly a thought came to him, and picking

himself up stiffly—for his expedition across the sodden ground and the subsequent tussle with his prisoner had left him aching in every bone and muscle—he went in search of water and a handkerchief. It did not take long to get them, and gently enough he sponged the caked mud from cheeks and a forehead young as his own. As he set down the bowl and turned to dry the water on the white, still face, the handkerchief he held fell to the ground.

"Karl von Rothenstein! by God!" he exclaimed.

The figure stirred, but the closed eyelids did not lift.

"Dear little mother, don't worry; I shall be all right. I——"

The voice sank into silence, and Baby, listening, heard beneath the young man's tones a sweet, low voice bidding him welcome to her home. That home was now enemy country.

"Well, I'm damned!" he said.

His prisoner stirred and tried to turn over on his side. Failing in this, he opened his eyes, fixing them full on Baby Charlton's face.

"Baby! by all that's holy!" he exclaimed. "You precious nearly did for me, old chap."

And Baby Charlton blushed as he heard himself saying, "I'm afraid I did!"

CHAPTER IV

THE GENERAL

"For us ultimate ends are many. They may reinforce each other, or they may weaken each other. They may harmonise, or they may clash. Personal ends may prove incompatible with group ends; one group end may prove incompatible with another. Loyalty may be ranged against loyalty, altruism against altruism; nor is there any court of appeal which can decide between them."—ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR: *Theism and Humanism.*

THE wintry sunshine, clear and cold, but laughing, dancing as southern sunshine ever laughs and dances, shone in, unchecked, through the curtainless windows of the farm-house parlour which did duty as General Hallam's office. The tray with rolls and coffee, brought to him at a very early hour, had been thrust aside on a chair near the wall, and the table in front of him was covered with papers. Carefully he read, noted, wrote: pausing sometimes, thinking out a situation; then writing rapidly as it unrolled itself before him. His brain worked quickly, visualising readily: a great gift in the command of armies. The months of war had changed him but little: always spare, wiry, upright in frame, there had been no superfluous flesh to lose. He was, perhaps, more bronzed, and about his temples the dark hair shot with grey showed almost white; yet this, if a sign

of age, was the only one. Every movement, however slight, revealed the strong vitality and energy of the man.

Presently a Staff officer entered, bringing more papers; not of grave importance, it seemed, from the rapidity with which the General ran through them, sometimes making marginal notes, erasing, and putting one after the other on one side as he read and signed. Then, as the pile beside him grew high and only two or three sheets remained within his hand, suddenly his eyes were arrested—held. From the page before him a name leapt out, challenging him, calling to him.

Silently he looked at it, each letter seeming to separate itself from its fellows, spelling and respelling the name: a name he knew.

He looked up.

"How was this prisoner, Captain von Rothenstein, taken? He does not appear to be wounded?"

"No, sir, but he seems to have had a blow that knocked him senseless. Charlton of the 8th Rifles took him while out on some reconnoitring work."

"Charlton, was it? Well, I'll go and see all the prisoners presently," the General said shortly; and glancing through the last remaining paper he added it to the little pile beside him. "I think that's all, Burton. Good-morning."

"Good-morning, sir;" and Captain Burton, placing the papers the General handed to him

carefully in his pocket-book, left the room, closing the door behind him.

It seemed to Osbert Hallam that it shut out the world of war, the world of reality, leaving with him, held in this small, bare room, voices, visions of that which had been, that which might have been, but never now could be.

* * * * *

It was an awkward interview. The name of von Rothenstein on the paper placed before him had for Osbert Hallam spelt hospitality and friendship—and something more. The man erect before him spoke with the voice that had held all these things, spoke in his mother-tongue as that mother spoke it; his fair skin and finely cut features sharply recalled the woman who, but a few months back, had welcomed him in her home, had bidden him, "Auf wiedersehen." Yet this birthright, this heritage, counted for nothing. It was the uniform and the rank it showed with which he had to deal, and not the man within it.

Briefly he questioned him, and Karl answered clearly, concisely, his whole attitude rigidly respectful and reserved. The softening shadows of the night were gone, and with them the confusing glamour of a return to consciousness with a familiar voice swearing comfortably in his ear, a friendly face bending over him. As he had awakened, stiff and aching in every limb, from a heavy sleep, the sleep of exhaustion, in the cold greyness of a slowly dawning day, a sudden realisation of what had happened had

come to him. A *prisoner:* the word seemed printed on an iron band about his heart, pressing into, constricting it. This was the end of all things; a living death. And he was unwounded, well, strong! With a groan, Karl had turned upon his side, striving to shut out all sight and knowledge of the coming day, the day that heralded captivity.

Baby Charlton also had slept dreamlessly, and had awakened in the cheerless dawn with a chill about his heart. Turning restlessly on his narrow mattress the sharp pain of a twisted muscle had roused memory, and he groaned aloud. Viewed in the dawn, the previous night's proceedings seemed a sorry affair, and even breakfast could not dissipate the gloom which had taken possession of him. He and the General's A.D.C., Captain Harvey, were the only people present when Karl von Rothenstein was brought before the General, and everyone acutely remembered that the last time they had all been together had been as his father's guests. Karl, however, with carefully schooled face and voice, had set himself to remember two things only: that he was a German and a prisoner. Formally, the customary questions were put and answered. These ended, the General paused, looking silently at the man before him, thinking, remembering; but Karl's eyes were on the ground. He must see in this man an enemy and a stranger, and to do this he must not meet his eyes. Suddenly the General spoke quickly:

"Is there anything I can do for you, von Rothenstein? If there is, I don't think I need say that I shall be glad, very glad, to do it."

The cold rigidity of Karl's features softened, his eyes lighted up and he smiled, a sudden, vivid smile which lighted his whole face.

"Would you, sir?" he answered eagerly. "Yes"—as the General made a gesture—"I know you would, and if in any way it were possible to let my mother know—perhaps I ought not to ask it; it will, I suppose, be difficult—impossible, perhaps, but if it *could*——"

The General interrupted him.

"Your mother shall hear—somehow," he said. "Have you any message?"

"Only my love, and tell her I am well—unhurt." He flushed hotly as he spoke, but added, "She will be glad."

"Yes," Osbert Hallam answered; "she will and shall be glad. Good-bye."

Karl grasped the hand he held out warmly.

"Good-bye, sir; I can't thank you. I—but my mother——"

A little line showed itself between the General's eyebrows.

"Your mother shall not suffer if I can help it," he said briefly.

* * * * *

To Osbert Hallam writing home was simply transmission of thought, and his pen would run rapidly over the paper in decided but difficult characters. The bond between him and his mother was close. His outlook on life was hers,

and if she sometimes perceived a more distant view which altered the perspective of his picture, she at least *saw* that picture. He knew that everything he wrote interested her, and his thoughts formed themselves into words as he wrote; yet to-night beneath the heading of his letter, "My dearest Mother," the sheet was blank. Thoughts failed to find words. Instead they made pictures. One after the other they rose before him, claiming, holding him, so that his pen slipped idly from his hand.

The walls of the bare little room in which he sat widened, opened; the air grew soft and warm, scented with innumerable flowers; and there was light everywhere, soft summery light filling the room, not caught and centred in lamps and chandeliers, but shining down like sunlight above the oak panelling of the great ball-room which, in his dream-picture, had blotted out the bareness of his office walls. Yet this floating radiance centred round one figure out of all those present: a white-clad figure, and a head and face perfectly modelled as that of a Greek coin, yet warm with life. The light seemed to be reflected in the pale gold of the hair which framed the lovely features and to deepen, burnish it. She turned to face him. The passionate music of a Hungarian love-song filled the room; and in it, through it, he heard her voice bidding him come to Hungary. Then he had lied to her—and in that lie had used his mother's name. He felt again the sudden shame that had burnt hotly in his heart

as Antoinette had repeated his words: "Your mother," she had said, "your mother ill? But of course you must go to her——"

Yet his mother, though fragile, delicate always, had not been ill, and the telegram had simply followed a formula agreed upon in case of need. The need had arisen: that which he had long foreseen as possible had become probable. War was in the air. This he could not tell her, so he had lied. Now, as again her face rose before him, the sympathy in her eyes seemed to reproach, upbraid.

"And you are an only child," she had said, "like my Karl. You must certainly go——" And he had gone: gone with her last words ringing in his ears—"Auf wiedersehen." But he, knowing that which it seemed must be between them should that word be fulfilled, had answered in the words which we have made good-bye, "God be with you!" Now, when she read the words of the telegram that would be sent to her from the German War Office, it would in truth seem to her that God had forsaken her. The sweet voice, as it had softened on those three words, "like my Karl," still sounded in his ears, but broken now by torturing fear.

Osbert Hallam knew, as perhaps only those sons who ever carry their lives in their hands can know, what that life means to the woman who gave it birth. Had news such as that which must shortly reach Grünberg been sent to his own mother concerning himself he well knew all that it would have meant to her and what

he would have given, had he been in such case as Karl's, to lift that crushing anxiety, deadly fear, from the mother he so dearly loved. Yet for this other woman who—— With a brusque movement, Osbert Hallam roused himself. He had no time for dreaming. He must act, and act at once, if comfort were to reach her before she had eaten her heart out over that crude official word "Missing." This bare word runs up and down the whole gamut of suffering. There is none too high or low for it to reach: or, it may mean the end of suffering—death. Those who see it written against the name they love learn every note and tone of pain it touches. It weakens hope and wears down courage. Something of this he might save her. Officially, further information would be long in reaching her. He must see to it that the promise given to her son was kept. Directly he could do nothing: only in one way could he help her. His mother might be his messenger. She knew so well how to comfort, to cheer and strengthen, and she loved the work, yet—— Deep within Osbert's heart lay the knowledge that this task his mother would not love; that between her and the woman he would have her comfort stood a barrier: the barrier that in every mother's heart walls out the woman whose life has barred the fulfilment of her child's destiny. It was this knowledge which had let the ink dry on his pen, which had checked each thought as it formed itself into words, asking always a question he had never asked before.

"How will this sound to her? Will this touch her, or will it seem too much for me to say?" His questions found no answer. He would think no more. He took up his pen resolutely and wrote rapidly, covering his sheets closely, telling the story simply, baldly almost. This done, he paused; then, taking up another sheet, he added:

"You will know better than anyone in the world what to say to her, for you will know what you would have wanted said to you had it been me."

* * * * *

Quickly he signed his name—

"Ever your loving son,

"OSBERT,"—

and thrusting the letter into an envelope, sealed and directed it.

CHAPTER V

A TELEGRAM AND A LETTER

" Il va bien, il vous aime bien et que son ciel,
C'est de vous revoir comme il est sûr de le faire."
PAUL VERLAINE.

HERR VON ROTHENSTEIN was in his laboratory. The Rothenstein works were at some distance from Grünberg Castle, and in normal times it was his custom to motor there very early every morning, to return at one o'clock for luncheon, since at Grünberg the light midday meal still prevailed, and then once more go back to work till dinner-time; but since the war his presence had been constantly required in Berlin in connection with various war organisations, and his presence now in his laboratory was also in close connection with war work, since he was on the track of a new and important discovery. That when thus engaged he should remain undisturbed was a rule so absolute that only two people in Germany could with impunity have infringed it: his wife and the Kaiser. When, therefore, on a cold, clear, wintry morning a deprecating knock sounded on the panels of his door, he frowned grimly and his voice was harsh as he answered with the question, " Who is it ?"

" Die gnädige Frau," the reply came quickly

in eager explanation of unwarranted temerity, and instantly the frown faded and Herr von Rothenstein hurried forward to unlock his door.

"Mein Engel——" The words died on his lips. It was Antoinette, but an Antoinette he had never seen. Haggard-eyed, with drawn face and trembling fingers, she thrust a telegram into his hand. It was from the Kriegsministerium in Berlin, and out from the cumbersome official phrases of regret one word leapt to eye and heart—"Vermisst."

A curious grey pallor spread slowly over Herr von Rothenstein's face as he read; but his voice was steady as, holding his wife closely to him, he said gently:

"Do not be frightened, my darling. Probably it only means that he is a prisoner——"

"A prisoner—Karl? No! he would never be taken."

Her husband smiled sadly.

"Mein Engel, men cannot always help themselves. Remember those Englishmen who were buried by a shell and dug out on our side."

Her eyes were on his face, distorted by fear.

"Then—you don't think—he is—dead?" she whispered.

"Of course not, darling. Had he been dead, they would have said so."

"But they might not have known."

"Not, perhaps, in a big battle, but there has been none, and in a small engagement they would certainly have known had he been killed."

"But how could he be taken prisoner if there has been no battle?"

"In some reconnaissance or small attack—a trench blown up, perhaps; there are many ways——"

"But he may be wounded," she cried, "and I cannot go to him!"

"My darling, if Karl were very ill, dangerously ill at home, here with us at Grünberg, should we not send for the best hospital nurse we could get?" he said tenderly. "If Karl is wounded he will have such a nurse."

The terror in Antoinette's eyes had lessened a little as she clung to him, listening.

"If only he is safe!" she sobbed. "If only I could know that!"

Very tenderly Fritz stroked her hair, from which the little fur toque had fallen back.

"We will telegraph," he said, "and they will do all they can; but we must be patient, mein Engel, patient and brave."

Antoinette raised her tear-stained face from his shoulder.

"I will try," she said. "Indeed, Fritz, I will try, but—it is so hard!"

Two great tears rolled down her cheeks and splashed upon his coat. He drew her head down upon his shoulder again as he answered, perhaps that she might not see his face upon which the dull grey hue had spread and deepened.

"My little angel," he said gently. "I think the good God will send you comfort."

* * * * *

A few days later Gräfin von Bärenfeld walked over to luncheon at Grünberg. In war-time the convenience she had previously found in lunching or dining there was considerably enhanced, food having increased in price as the means to purchase it had decreased, and she still felt that the fact that the name of von Bärenfeld had figured in the Almanach de Gotha hundreds of years before that of Rothenstein had been even whispered in polite circles left the benefaction entirely on her side.

Things were very simply done now at Grünberg; a German cook had replaced the French *chef* and there were, of course, no men-servants; but there was plenty of food and wine also, and the Gräfin had a hearty, camel-like appetite which enabled her to eat enough at one meal to do for two: a distinct advantage when that one is provided by a neighbour, and a neighbour who expects and receives no return.

More than a week had gone by since the telegram concerning Karl had reached Grünberg, and the dark circles beneath Antoinette's blue eyes, the faint lines, for the first time visible, about her mouth, told of wakeful nights and weary days.

"It must be terrible for you not to know what has become of your son," the Gräfin said, as she spread her dinner-napkin across her ample knees and attacked a large plateful of sausage soup. "For my part I would sooner know that he was dead."

"Oh no! Not that!" Antoinette cried, her voice trembling pitifully.

"But it is surely better than to be wounded and a prisoner: hacked to bits by ignorant English doctors! But I forget you are English yourself. I ought not to have spoken—and no doubt, since your son is half English too, he will receive better treatment."

Antoinette coloured hotly.

"That would certainly not happen," she said quickly; "and neither Karl nor I would wish it, even if what you say were true and he is wounded and——"

Her husband interrupted her.

"The Gräfin must know exactly how prisoners are treated in England," he said suavely, "since her brother was one of the first to be taken."

A dull flush of resentment rose beneath the thick yellow of the Gräfin's skin. Her brother's surrender had not been regarded as creditable or, indeed, necessary.

"I do not hear from him," she said shortly. "The censorship is so strict in England. They let nothing through."

"That is unfortunate. You must, I fear, feel very anxious about him," Herr von Rothenstein answered politely. "Also, his letters would doubtless be interesting. Only the other day, when I was in Berlin, I heard the War Minister speaking of him."

The dull flush deepened on the sallow cheek. The Gräfin also had heard things which the War Minister had said about her brother.

"This is an excellent chicken," she said abruptly, turning to Antoinette. "Do you rear them yourselves?"

A slight smile curled the corners of Fritz von Rothenstein's mouth, but he proceeded to eat the chicken which, as the Gräfin had said, was undoubtedly excellent, and the subject dropped. The Gräfin ate quickly; she had come for a meal, and she intended to have it. No rudeness on the part of her host should prevent that; but when once she had had all she wanted nothing should, she determined, induce her to stay one moment longer under the vulgarian's roof. She had already done him too much honour. She had not long to wait. Now that two-fourths of the castle had been turned into a hospital and another fourth shut up, meals were served in the hall and, no sooner had coffee and cigarettes been handed round than the Gräfin, gulping down her coffee, said that she must go. Antoinette did not attempt to dissuade her. She had never liked her, but the kindly generosity of her soul had found pity for a woman who, like a homeless sparrow, was ever seeking crumbs upon the highway. To-day, however, pity was smothered by resentment. Standing by her husband's side within the doorway she watched her walk briskly down the avenue. Then suddenly she turned towards him:

"Fritz, do you remember seeing Irving's adaptation of Faust?"

Her husband laughed.

"Yes. You are thinking of Mephistopheles'

remark about Martha—' I wonder where she'll go to by-and-by? *I* won't have her.' It's a difficult question!"

"Yes," Antoinette agreed heartily. "She wants—room——" and she spread out her arms in an effort to indicate limitless space.

* * * * *

A few moments later, when the car which Herr von Rothenstein retained for business purposes drew up at the door to take him back to his work, Antoinette returned to her patients. Since the first day of the war when, in order to escape thought, she had thrown herself heart and soul into the work of transforming the beautiful rooms of the old castle into a hospital, these patients had been her chief care and interest. Very thoroughly had she learnt her work and never was woman more tender or devoted. Her patients loved her, and when with them she felt no longer an alien: outcast from her own land, yet a stranger here, as some in her own class had made her feel during the months of war.

Since the arrival of the telegram concerning Karl, however, Antoinette had shown a restless anxiety concerning her patients which the calming assurances of the professional nurse wholly failed to arrest. Antoinette had been initiated into nursing through a very baptism of fire. She had seen terrible things in the days of her novitiate: huge gaping wounds, severed limbs, bones shattered, nerves and muscles torn.

And now, beside and behind each patient still within her ward, she saw these others, some of whom had recovered and had gone back to fight again; others who now lay within the graveyard of the little church whose steeple pierced the trees of the Grünberg woods: every gaping wound, severed limb, or shattered frame, seemed that of her son.

This afternoon as she passed down the ward and paused beside the bed of a sleeping man whose case, at first deemed hopeless, was now the triumph of the hospital, he opened his eyes suddenly and smiled up at her.

"Why, Hans, I thought you were asleep," she said.

"Just dozing, gracious lady," he answered. "It is pleasant just to be awake enough to know the pain is gone. It seems as if one had come into heaven from hell."

"I know," she said gently. "You suffered horribly."

"But it is over now," he exclaimed, "and we won't speak of it. The gracious lady looks tired—sad?"

Antoinette's lips trembled as she answered.

"I am anxious about my son," she said, so low that Hans only just caught the words.

"Ah, but that must not be! God will keep him safe. He will be cared for as the gracious lady has cared for us."

They were almost the words her husband had said to her that morning; yet, spoken by this poor Catholic soldier of Southern Germany,

they had an arresting quality that somehow carried conviction into her very heart.

"You believe that?" she asked.

"Surely," the man answered simply; "those you have cared for pray for you, and their prayers will protect your son and bring him safely back to you."

"Please God," she said, and passed upon her way. The man's eyes followed her and his lips moved, praying for her with the sure faith that lifts these simple souls to heights that culture cannot reach.

Antoinette stayed late in the wards that evening and it was a little past eight o'clock when, having changed her nurse's dress for a soft white tea-gown, she came down into the hall; her husband, however, had only just come in. The post had arrived, and a formidable array of letters and papers was spread out on a table in the window awaiting him. There were several for her also: business letters mostly in connection with her hospital; their envelopes told their contents. One letter, however, was not official; it bore a Dutch stamp and was addressed in a handwriting wholly strange to her. She took it up curiously—who could be writing to her in this unfamiliar hand? Could it be a letter from England, forwarded through this kindly neutral? No; she heard but seldom now even from her most intimate friends. Neither she nor they could write that which would truly interest, so the letters grew perforce, as time passed on, harder to write,

duller to read. Listlessly she tore the thin envelope. It enclosed another thicker than itself, bearing her name written in a flowing English hand. She tore this also. Then suddenly a great light leapt in her eyes, though her face grew deadly white. Breathlessly she followed the clear writing from page to page, devouring every word. Then, pressing the flimsy paper to her lips, she rushed across the hall towards the staircase.

"Fritz!" she called. "Fritz! Fritz! Come! Come quickly!" and still calling, clutching the letter tightly, she ran up the staircase. As she reached the first landing her husband appeared in his shirt-sleeves at his dressing-room door, which opened on to the top of the staircase, and hurried down to meet her.

"Mein Engel, what is it?" he called anxiously.

"Karl!" she cried—"alive, well! Oh, Fritz, it is wonderful!" She thrust the letter into his hand and, sitting suddenly down on the stairs, she leant her head against the banisters and sobbed.

In a moment Herr von Rothenstein's quick eye had grasped the tenor of the letter; the next he was seated beside her, his arm round her as he said, over and over again:

"Mein Engel, don't cry! Our boy is safe, well. Don't cry, my darling! Don't cry! He is well, safe!"

But Antoinette cried on. The wall of ice that she had built about her heart had given way, melted by sunshine.

CHAPTER VI

TREATING OF ALIEN ENEMIES

"'Ah! but we aren't playing the maxims,' said the Maltese Cat. 'We're playing the Game.'"—RUDYARD KIPLING.

ABOUT a week later, Lady Hallam was seated at the small round table which, when alone in cold winter days, she always had placed near the wide fireplace in her dining-room. She was fitfully sipping her breakfast cup of coffee and, wholly uninterested in her egg of which she had absently chipped the shell, allowed it to grow cold in its silver cup while she scanned the columns of her newspaper eagerly. There was, however, little news this morning and letting it drop, discarded, on the floor, her eyes at last turned to her plate. A tepid egg is not, however, absorbing, and she looked up quickly as the door opened and her old butler came in, with a salver bearing a foreign letter. It was a bulky packet and had the printed name of some firm unknown to her, in a neutral country, printed on the envelope.

Impatiently she pushed it on one side. It seemed clearly one of the many touching appeals for wine orders so familiar to householders. In all probability an offer of some superb substitute for Hock or Moselle, she reflected, and went on

with her egg. It had not, however, grown warmer and, putting down her spoon, she took a piece of toast and a little tangerine marmalade. Then she opened the letter. To her surprise, it contained no printed circular or list of wines, but another envelope, the address on which had obviously been penned by a lady's hand. As she noted this her eyebrows contracted sharply, forming the two little vertical lines in her forehead which with her, as with her son, ever betrayed some fretting thought. Quickly she tore the envelope. The sheets it held were closely written, but no address headed them. As she read the first page, the sharp lines between her brows became less accentuated, her eyes softened and, as she turned from sheet to sheet, tears slowly rose and dimmed them. She read slowly, carefully, not missing a word from end to end, and as she read the last words a large tear fell softly on the centre of the page and, letting the loose sheets fall upon her knee, she sat looking into the fire, thinking, wondering. Presently she took the letter up again and slowly read it through once more; then, folding it carefully, she put it back into its envelope and, rising, went over to the bow-window which looked out upon the Square gardens—those gardens on to which she and her son had looked on the eve of his departure for France, and where he had told her she must never hope to see her little grandchildren run to and fro. The ground was hard with frost now, the branches of the trees were bare, the garden empty. Her

house was empty also. With a sigh, Lady Hallam turned back into the room.

"She is a dear woman," she said softly. "Why in Heaven's name did she marry a German?"

* * * * *

It was on the afternoon of that day that Geoffrey Leigh had invited Lady Hallam to have tea with him at the Foreign Office. He was less busy now and afternoon tea was a meal for which he had an especial affection, particularly on wintry afternoons. He was very fond of Lady Hallam and she of him, and on this particular day her pleasure in the prospect of a talk with him was enhanced by the thought that he might be able to tell her something of Frau von Rothenstein. She had an idea that he had stayed at Grünberg when studying in Germany, and if so, he would certainly be interested to hear of the letter she had received. She would not, however, read it to him. It was a mother's letter written to a mother and not for the cold, critical, eyes and ears of clever young men.

Geoffrey understood the tea-table thoroughly, as most men educated at Public School and University do. His old nurse, who had been his mother's nurse also, and who was now pensioned off and living in a cottage on the estate, had paid striking tribute to this when Geoffrey had visited her on a day when, stricken down by one of those crushing headaches which numb all thought, sight, taste, and every other sense, she sat

huddled in her chair over a dying fire. Quickly, deftly, Geoffrey had raked the embers together and had blown them to a blaze; then, filling the kettle, he had set it on the fire and had made her tea and toast, the like of which she declared she had never tasted. When, next day, his mother visited her, she found her completely recovered and full of admiration for an education which had had such practical results. "You know, ma'am, it always seemed to me you were wasting a terrible lot of money sending Master Geoffrey to Eton and Oxford, but they did teach him to make a good cup of tea!" she said conclusively.

This teaching Geoffrey had not forgotten, and when Lady Hallam found herself installed in a very comfortable arm-chair beside the great fireplace whose hospitable warmth embraced even the far corners of the large room, she recalled the tale and reminded him of it. Geoffrey laughed.

"It's the fagging system," he answered. "If the water didn't boil or the teapot wasn't warmed, or the toast was burnt, one got smacked."

"How I wish they had fag-masters in Board schools!" Lady Hallam said fervently; "we should get better servants then."

"Well, I haven't much to complain of," Geoffrey answered, as he uncovered a perfectly toasted muffin and handed it to her. "But I agree with you that it is the lack of discipline in the lower classes which is at the root of most of our present difficulties."

"Yes; they don't learn it either in work or in games as you do," Lady Hallam answered.

"No; I don't think anything helps more than games to get men to work together. After all, playing for one's school is much the same thing as fighting for the Empire. What one wants, as Rudyard Kipling put it, is a crack team: not a team of crack players."

"Yet the Germans, who are not great at games, get it," Lady Hallam said thoughtfully.

"But there you have iron discipline," Geoffrey answered. "Obedience instead of co-ordination. It produces a marvellous machine; but if our Public-School system only ran through the Board schools we should have one infinitely superior, because, if broken up, it could still work in pieces until it could get together again; while the other, responsive only to orders, must collapse should the orders fail."

"Will they ever fail?"

"Not in the giving, I think," Geoffrey answered, "but a day must come when the execution of them will fail. In all machines, however perfect, some parts of the mechanism must wear out in time; and if it cannot be repaired, the wheels grow clogged and work slowly, inefficiently. It is even conceivable that the engine may explode. So, at least, it seems to me."

"You are probably right," Lady Hallam said thoughtfully, "but the time is long—especially for wives and mothers," she added, with a pathetic little smile.

"I hope you get good news of Osbert," Geoffrey said quickly, with real sympathy.

"Yes, thanks. You know it is his pride that he has never 'gone sick,' as they say, on duty in his life, and Generals, as he constantly impresses on me, are not likely to be wounded."

"Of course not," Geoffrey said hastily, anxious that his instantaneous recollection of two or three who had been killed should not betray itself.

Again that pathetic little smile rose to Lady Hallam's lips. She too remembered.

"He says they are a wonderfully brave enemy, and even their half-trained troops have plenty of courage, but he thinks the base devices they have recourse to show that they have lost faith in themselves."

"I expect he is right. I certainly thought they would have preserved the common decencies of war, although I never liked them—I saw too much of Prussianism."

"I suppose so. You were in Berlin, I know; but didn't you see something of the cosmopolitan society in Germany also? I fancied you stayed at Grünberg once or twice?"

"Yes; for a few days. It was a lovely place, and they usually had some charming people there."

"I am interested in Frau von Rothenstein," Lady Hallam said slowly, as she poured herself out a second cup of tea. "Tell me about her."

"She is a remarkable woman," Geoffrey answered—"very lovely, clever and charming,

yet somehow curiously unaffected by it all. Most beautiful and clever women seem to feel their beauty and brains all the time, just as I feel my clothes when I've got into a Court suit; but she doesn't."

"I know what you mean," Lady Hallam answered. "I saw her picture in the Paris Salon, and she looked like a flower."

"That's just what she is like," Geoffrey said eagerly—"a hothouse flower; I hate to think of her in these days. It must be awful for her."

"Yes; her son has been taken prisoner," Lady Hallam said. She still spoke slowly, thinking, it seemed, as she spoke.

"Her son! Karl! Karl a prisoner?" Geoffrey cried excitedly. "How did you hear?"

"Osbert told me. He was brought before him."

"By Jove! you don't say so? How beastly for both of them."

"I wrote to his mother," Lady Hallam continued. "A friend at a neutral legation got it through for me. It would have been some time before she could have heard officially, and waiting—not knowing—is horrible. I waited once for news of Osbert; the first wire said, 'Dangerously wounded,' and then I had to wait and wait for days—the telegraph wires had been cut——" Her voice trembled as she broke off in the middle of her sentence. Impulsively, Geoffrey laid his hand on hers.

"So you wrote to Grünberg?" he said.

"Yes; my neutral friend managed it all right

for me, and this morning I heard from her. It was her letter that showed me what an interesting woman she must be—and how lovable."

"Yes; everyone is in love with her, beginning with her husband," Geoffrey said, laughing.

"And she?"

"Oh, she just accepts it all: much as the flower you said she was like accepts the sunshine and blooms in it."

"Poor soul! there can be little sunshine now."

"No; she adores Karl. They look like brother and sister."

"Yes; I should have said from the photograph Osbert had of the son on his polo pony, with his mother holding the bridle, that they *were* brother and sister. She must have married very young.

"I believe she did; and she's kept young. Herr von Rothenstein keeps her in cotton-wool and never lets any worries get near her."

"Poor soul!" Lady Hallam said again. She knew that one has to learn to suffer as one learns other things, and the first lessons are very hard.

Geoffrey refilled her cup; he held that tea-drinking was more profitable than thinking in these days. As she took it, the door opened and Colonel Armstrong came in.

"Hullo, Armstrong! have some tea?" Geoffrey suggested hospitably, brandishing his tea-pot as an earnest of his sincerity.

"Tea?" Colonel Armstrong repeated absently, as he shook hands with Lady Hallam. "Oh,

well, yes; I think I will have a cup. I haven't had any lunch, now I come to think of it."

"Then have an egg, or some cold meat or something?" Geoffrey urged, his hand on the bell, but Colonel Armstrong shook his head.

"No, thanks; I don't feel like meat;" and he helped himself to muffin.

"Were you too busy to get out for lunch?" Lady Hallam inquired sympathetically.

"Well, we are confoundedly busy, but it wasn't exactly that. I did get off for half an hour, but I had to go over to the Home Office. The fact is, Rosamund's coming over."

"No? Really? I congratulate you," Lady Hallam said warmly.

"Thanks awfully; but I'm in the devil of a fix about it. Her mother, Mrs. Crosland, who has the Early Victorian method, in spite of being an American, of getting every man she comes across to do every blessed thing she wants, has got some sort of a passport for Rosamund out of the State Department; but it appears that won't entitle her to land, as she's an alien enemy and only our Home Office can let her in, so I tried to get hold of somebody to work it for me."

"Did you manage it?" Geoffrey asked as he helped himself to bread-and-jam.

"Confound it, no! They won't recognise her as an American, but keep on about her being an alien enemy—seem to think getting her on shore will be no end of a job. They were very civil—said they would see what could be

done and let me know—but they didn't seem to grasp that there isn't time for all that."

"They are very busy," Lady Hallam suggested gently.

"Busy! We're all busy! But they might realise that a thing like this has to be shoved through at once."

"Is that how you work things in the War Office?" Geoffrey innocently queried.

"Well, of course we're up to our eyes in work there, and when people come bothering about things that don't matter a pin to anybody but themselves——" He broke off short, as his eyes suddenly lighted on Lady Hallam's amused face. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, with a sudden laugh; "I suppose that's just how my affairs seemed to them."

Lady Hallam joined in his laugh while Geoffrey, who had moved away in search of cigarettes, murmured a word which might have been "Impossible," but which sounded more like "Possibly."

"Officials are unsympathetic—to men," Lady Hallam said in the soft, low tones that were so pleasant to jarred nerves.

"That's just it," Colonel Armstrong answered eagerly. "They're quite different with women—anyhow, with some women—Mrs. Crosland, for instance. A woman who can get what she wants out of German Generals would turn our Home Office round her little finger, and the worst of it is she won't be able to see why the devil I can't!"

Lady Hallam and Geoffrey laughed.

"It's no laughing matter," George Armstrong continued gloomily. "She's a wonderful woman, but she takes a lot of living up to. If she and Rosamund arrive here and I can't get Rosamund off the boat, I believe she'll drag her back to America and try to get a promise out of her, when she's seasick, to chuck over a man who's made her seasick twice over by being too poor a thing to get her on land when she's crossed the sea to come to him."

Geoffrey burst out laughing and Colonel Armstrong turned on him angrily.

"It's all very well to laugh; I know I'm absurd. Men in love always are. But how would you like to have the woman you want to marry kept a prisoner in a beastly boat when you're waiting on the pier with a marriage licence in your pocket?"

"Not at all," Geoffrey said heartily. "It's a beastly fix."

"Yes; isn't it? I say, Leigh, couldn't you help me?"

Geoffrey shook his head.

"We have nothing to do with enemy aliens. The Home Office deals with them entirely."

"But couldn't you get hold of someone there? I thought you knew a man rather high up? Isn't there anything you can do? *Anyone* you can get hold of?"

Geoffrey hesitated; the anxiety in Colonel Armstrong's face and voice were very real.

"I do know one fellow," he said slowly,

" who has always been awfully nice about anything I had to see him about; but I don't know if this would be his job and——"

" Couldn't you ask?" Lady Hallam put in gently.

Geoffrey turned towards her, and his eyes met hers.

" Yes; I might ask; but of course I don't know if he would be able to do anything."

" Try him, anyhow, for Heaven's sake!" George Armstrong urged. " You don't know what this thing means to me."

" Well, I'll try," Geoffrey answered; and Lady Hallam rose to go.

" You must both lunch with me on Sunday and tell me the result," she said. " You will, won't you?"

In a breath they accepted—people usually did accept Lady Hallam's invitations—and Geoffrey walked down the passage with her to the lift.

" It's a nuisance, I know," she said, as the sitting-room door closed behind them, leaving Colonel Armstrong shut within it, " but you are doing a good action. He is really in love and he will make a good husband. As a Frenchman once said to me of his English brother-in-law, ' *Excellent comme mari, très solide*, but ' (and he relapsed into energetic English) ' to me such a bore.' "

" He's a real good fellow, though," Geoffrey urged.

" He is," she agreed cordially, " and it is that which counts."

CHAPTER VII

THE LABORATORY

"En temps de guerre on guérit un peu de tout, n'importe où."—*Heures de Guerre de la Famille Valadier.*

HERR VON ROTHENSTEIN'S staff were anxious. It had often happened that he remained shut into his private laboratory until so close upon his dinner-hour that the utmost speed of his motor gave him no time for even the quickest change into evening clothes; but at home *chef*, valet, wife, were all used to this and waited for him with a readiness that almost obliterated time. There had been occasions also, though these were rare, when, altogether disregarding the dinner-hour, he had worked on into the night, but on these occasions he had never failed to telephone to his wife. Yet to-night all was silent. The closed door, behind which the great brain and clever hands tirelessly worked in their ceaseless endeavour to wrest from Nature secrets the possession of which makes men her master, allowed no sound or movement to penetrate its heavy panels. Outside his secretary waited. The clock struck eight. He pushed aside his writing and glanced towards the closed door, listening for the welcome grating sound of a key turning in the lock.

The striking of the hour seldom failed to remind Fritz von Rothenstein that in the hall at Grünberg his wife listened for his coming. Yet to-night no sound came, and with a sigh Herr Schmidt took up his pen again. In all times the satellites of those great spirits, absorbed in the rarefied rigours of science, art, religion, suffer through the more mundane mechanism of their frames, which register the passing hours with a chronology as certain as that of the spirits they serve is uncertain. Herr Schmidt also had a wife, an excellent Hausfrau, and he knew that a savoury supper was awaiting him at home. It was, indeed, of the supper that he thought, his wife, although its creator, appearing to him merely as an accessory. It has been said that in order to do really good literary work one should starve in a garret, but it is difficult to take interest in the writing of other people's letters when one wants to eat, and a quarter of an hour later Herr Schmidt laid down his pen, closed the last letter he had written and put away his papers. Herr von Rothenstein would surely delay no longer. In a few moments at the latest he would either rush through the secretary's room, calling out some hurried word as to to-morrow's business, and leap into his motor, ordering his chauffeur to outstrip time, or he would open the door a few inches, just enough to give a glimpse of an absorbed face and ruffled hair, and desire that a telephone message might at once be sent to Grünberg announcing that his return home

before midnight, at earliest, was impossible, setting his secretary free to hurry home, where he might eat and be thankful. How thankful he would be, he reflected, as the moments passed, bringing no sound or movement from the room within. The half-hour struck, and as its sound died away in the stillness of the growing night, suddenly, insistently, a telephone-bell rang sharply through the room. Quickly Herr Schmidt returned to his writing-table and took up the receiver. "No. Herr von Rothenstein had not started; had not left his laboratory; had given no message. Yes; he would hold the line while the gracious lady was informed of this." He had not long to wait: the gracious lady's message was emphatic. Herr Schmidt hesitated. "He did not know—it would, of course, be possible to knock at the door, but it would be in absolute defiance of Herr von Rothenstein's orders. In all probability he would not answer. If he did—— No; really Herr Schmidt felt he could not act against this never abrogated rule. Yes; he would hold the line, but——" The pause was short, and in an instant Herr Schmidt was sitting erect, every muscle tense with respectful attention. "It is the gracious lady speaking? But she must not distress herself; there could surely be no cause that she should be alarmed. The Herr Doctor was doubtless absorbed in his work and had lost count of time. True, he had never before remained so late, when the gracious lady was at home, without sending a message, but at other times it had

occasionally happened. Yes; if the gracious lady commanded it he would knock at the door and say that she was anxious, but—— Certainly, if it was her wish, he would obey the gracious lady's command at once;" and hanging up the receiver, Herr Schmidt hurriedly crossed the room and knocked with trembling hand at the closed door. Then he waited, dreading now its opening as before he had longed for it; but no sound came. He hesitated; put his ear to the door; all was silent. Timidly he knocked again softly; then a little louder, shrinking back as the raps resounded on the thick panels; but no answer came. Every nerve alert, he again bent forward, listening. Once more the telephone-bell rang out sharply, rending the silence, and hurriedly Herr Schmidt obeyed the summons. "No! there was no answer; all was quite silent in the room; he could hear nothing. He would, of course, knock again, since the gracious lady desired it. It grieved him that she should feel anxious. There was really no reason, and it would distress the Herr Doctor unspeakably. Oh, the gracious lady was coming down herself. Then, undoubtedly, the Herr Doctor would unlock the door. Should he try to inform him of her intention? No? Well, of course, if the gracious lady preferred to come——"

With a sigh of relief, Herr Schmidt hung up the receiver. The matter was out of his hands. He glanced at the clock. It was nearly nine. His supper would probably be spoilt, and he was very hungry. It was, indeed, well that the

gracious lady should come, and once more Herr Schmidt seated himself at his writing-table. He knew it to be the only position in which a secretary really shines in the eyes of his employer.

* * * * *

A few moments later the deserted street below, seemingly wrapped in sleep, was roused by the rushing sound of a motor speeding through the night and stopping with a whirr beneath the window in which the secretary's writing-table stood. A bell clanged through the building. Hurriedly the door was flung open and in another moment Herr Schmidt heard steps upon the stairs; but he remained seated, a half-written letter before him, pen in hand, until those hurrying footsteps reached the threshold of his room; then, letting his pen fall upon the note-paper, he rose. As he did so the door opened, and Antoinette von Rothenstein, a dark sable cloak flung about her shoulders, over the soft white drapery of her tea-gown, came in hastily. She did not look at him, and he felt with a pang that the correctness and industry of his attitude had been entirely wasted. She hurried over to the laboratory door and raised her hand to knock; then, at a sudden thought, she paused and, turning to Herr Schmidt, said quickly:

"Is the Herr Doctor still here, still silent?"

"Yes, gracious lady; the door has remained closed and I could obtain no answer."

Then, feverishly, Antoinette rapped upon the panels—rapped and rapped again, louder and

louder, bruising her delicate hands and calling beseechingly to her husband to answer.

"It is Antoinette, Fritz, Antoinette! Don't you hear me? I am frightened. Answer me, Fritz, answer me, if only to tell me to go away! Fritz; Fritz!——" But no answer came.

Her fear, the silence that answered it, sent a sudden misgiving through Herr Schmidt's well-regulated mind. Was it possible that the Herr Doctor might have been taken ill? He hurried over to Antoinette's side.

"Does the gracious lady think——" he began diffidently.

Antoinette turned to him, her face white and drawn with anxiety.

"My God! what is it?" she whispered. "I—I—— Don't look like that!" she broke out, as she met the blank fear in the secretary's round eyes. "Do something! Call someone! Anyone—*anything*—but break open that door!"

Herr Schmidt hurried from the room. He knew how to obey orders; speedily he returned, followed by men with tools. Antoinette was leaning against the door, her lips pressed against its hinges, calling, calling; yet no answer came.

The work began; and in a few moments the door fell back. The electric light was turned full on, illuminating the room within. Herr von Rothenstein was seated by a table at the far end in an arm-chair, slightly pushed back. In an instant Antoinette was beside it, kneeling on the ground, her hands clasping the hand that lay rigid on the arm of the chair, her voice calling, "Fritz!

Fritz! It is Antoinette! Speak to me! Fritz, *Fritz!*" But no answer came. Cold and still the figure remained rigid in the chair in which he had been writing, a strange grey pallor on his face, and his lips cold and blue.

* * * * *

Vainly they tried to draw her away. At last the old doctor, summoned in haste, who had attended her when Karl was born, roused her.

"You must come home," he said authoritatively, "for Karl's sake."

Then at length she raised her head.

"For Karl's sake?" she repeated.

"Yes;" and, stretching out his hand, the old man drew her to her feet. "Karl will need you. He has no one else now."

Then, at last, she let him take her home.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEST MAN

"Are we to attach transcendental value to the feelings of a man in love?"—Rt. Hon. Arthur James Balfour: *Theism and Humanism.*

Geoffrey Leigh was late for luncheon and Lady Hallam decided that, having given him ten minutes' grace, he should have no more.

Colonel Armstrong, with military punctuality, had arrived as the clock struck the half-hour and Lady Hallam felt, after ten minutes' conversation, that a kidney *sauté*, accompanied by a glass of claret, would be very sustaining.

She had finished both when Geoffrey walked in. He was full of apologies.

"I simply overslept myself," he said frankly. "We had a very heavy night, and when Baynes called me at eleven-thirty I promptly went to sleep again. I'm awfully sorry—I——"

But Lady Hallam interrupted him.

"Don't be sorry," she said kindly, "but sit down and eat your luncheon. I am very glad you slept on. To lose your sleep would have been much worse for you than to lose my luncheon."

"I can't agree with you there," Geoffrey said emphatically. He had already eaten two kidneys, and was appreciatively sipping his claret.

Lady Hallam smiled, seizing the subtle compliment. Praise of her cuisine, which she herself inspired, was always pleasing to her. Colonel Armstrong, however, had finished his *rognons sautés*, eating them quickly, unappreciatively.

"Any news?" he asked abruptly.

"Nothing important," Geoffrey answered, in a non-committal tone.

Lady Hallam looked at him sharply; she had heard that tone before.

"Wouldn't you have heard it at the War Office if there had been any news?" she asked.

"Oh, I didn't mean war news," Colonel Armstrong said quickly; "but Geoffrey was to see his Home Office man last night, and—— You did see him, I suppose?" he added sharply, apparently goaded on to cross-examination by Geoffrey's appetite. He had completely emptied the dish of *rognons* which had been placed in front of him.

"Oh yes, I saw him," Geoffrey said, his eyes, and apparently all his attention, on his plate.

"And can he work it? What's he going to do?"

"Well, he's not going to do much," Geoffrey answered leisurely.

Colonel Armstrong stared at him blankly.

"Not going to do much?" he repeated dully; "then how the devil am I to manage things?"

"You won't," Geoffrey said placidly. "I regret to say that I shall have to do that."

"You!" Lady Hallam and her guest exclaimed in one breath. "*You?*"

"Yes; that unfortunately is the case. It appears that to bring an alien enemy into England at this moment is a very difficult matter——"

"B-b-but——" Colonel Armstrong interrupted, stuttering with excitement and vexation.

"One moment," Geoffrey said quietly. "You and I, Armstrong, know Baroness von Steinberg, and know that she is coming to England to marry you, and for no other reason: but our country and hers are at war; the regulations as to the admission of enemy aliens are strict, and——"

But Colonel Armstrong could listen no longer.

"But, damn it all, you don't mean they've refused?" he cried, forgetful of everything and everyone save Rosamund.

"No; but they will only let her land under a guarantee that she becomes your wife within twelve hours of landing; and the worst of it is I've got to see that she does it."

Colonel Armstrong gasped. He could not even stutter.

"Then, I suppose," said Lady Hallam gently, "that you will be best man?"

Geoffrey turned quickly towards her, and as his eyes met hers they both laughed, suddenly, irresistibly.

George Armstrong looked at them in bewilderment.

"Best man?" he repeated.

"Why, that will be a capital plan, won't it?" Lady Hallam said quickly. "Geoffrey will

meet her on the boat, guarantee that she is the right lady, hand her over to you and stand behind you as best man while you marry her."

"By Jove!" Colonel Armstrong muttered, and drank his glass of whisky-and-soda at a gulp.

"Best man certainly sounds better than 'Government representative,' or anything of that sort," Geoffrey said gravely, though his eyes twinkled as he glanced across the table at his hostess.

Colonel Armstrong stared.

"Do you really mean that you've got to watch her until she is my wife?" he demanded.

"Not quite all the time," Geoffrey said reassuringly, "but they want me to see her married."

"And you couldn't have a better best man," Lady Hallam interpolated.

"That's true," Colonel Armstrong agreed cordially, "but it's all so devilish rum, I don't know where I am."

"Neither shall I," Geoffrey murmured plaintively.

"When do you expect Baroness von Steinberg to arrive?" Lady Hallam asked.

"About the tenth."

"She comes to Liverpool, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"It will be all right, old chap," Geoffrey said reassuringly. "You'll just take her off to a Registry Office and——"

"A Registry Office!" Colonel Armstrong repeated. "Good Lord! Why, her mother

has sent me sheets about flowers and palms and wedding-cake and——"

"Oh, well, you must cut all that."

But Colonel Armstrong shook his head gloomily.

"You don't know Mrs. Crosland," he said; "I do. Why, she would never regard me as Rosamund's husband if we weren't married in a church or a drawing-room—a New York drawing-room!"

"As regards the church I agree with her," Lady Hallam said decidedly. "And, after all, there must be several churches in Liverpool."

"Beastly place!" Colonel Armstrong said gloomily. "She'll hate it."

Lady Hallam turned to Geoffrey.

"Must it be in Liverpool?" she asked.

"No; time, not place, is the condition, there won't be much time to get anywhere else."

"In a motor," Lady Hallam answered, "one can get to my brother's place in two hours. I am sure he would take us in. Shall I come with you and Geoffrey, Colonel Armstrong, to meet your bride and her mother and take them to Westwood? There is a chapel attached to the house, you know, and we can give her a pretty little country wedding."

"Westwood? Why, it would be perfect!" George Armstrong exclaimed enthusiastically. "But do you really think Lord Westwood——?"

Lady Hallam smiled.

"It is Westwood's habit always to do what I want," she said finally.

"I don't know how to thank you," he said eagerly.

"Don't try. I shall like to make a pretty wedding for your Rosamund, and I am always glad to be at Westwood."

"You are always glad to do a good action," George Armstrong said warmly; but Lady Hallam shook her head.

"I think it is Geoffrey who is doing the good action," she said. "He brings the jewel; I only find the setting. Without me you would still get your jewel; without him the empty setting would scarcely please you."

"By Jove, no! I never thought of that," Colonel Armstrong exclaimed. "What a confoundedly lucky thing it is, Leigh, that you're in the F.O."

"Glad you think so," Geoffrey answered dryly; and Lady Hallam laughed. These two were a perpetual amusement to her.

CHAPTER IX

LIVERPOOL

" And crowds that stream from yawning doors
And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;
Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

" Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And thro' a lattice on the soul
Looks the fair face and makes it still."

ALFRED TENNYSON: *In Memoriam.*

THE moon was at its full and in its purifying rays even the murky docks and smoke-stained buildings of Liverpool showed whiter, clearer, cleanlier, and it seemed to George Armstrong that a path of silver bridged the strip of water between the great Cunard liner which had brought Rosamund across the Atlantic and the dock on which he stood.

So many formalities now surrounded the arrival of these steamers, entailing a delay so tedious, and making the admission of strangers to the ships so inconvenient, that it had been decided that Geoffrey Leigh should go on board alone since, as Baroness von Steinberg had no passport, it would be well to avoid all observation and comment and to wait quietly until all the passengers properly provided with passports had left the ship so that she could follow unobserved.

Lady Hallam had decreed that her own motor, in which she had travelled down from London, should accompany Lord Westwood's into Liverpool.

"Your motor, and yourself, will bring Mrs. Crosland and the Colonel-cousin," she explained to her brother, "and Geoffrey can go outside and smoke; he will want a pipe after the boat business. Then Colonel Armstrong can bring his bride in my car, and get over all his love-making before supper, instead of boring us all by inarticulate adoration, illustrated by speaking glances. The wrong people always intercept them and it's so tiresome when one is hungry and anxious to get on with one's supper."

Lord Westwood had no anxiety to drive into Liverpool and spend some undefined time waiting about while Geoffrey Leigh retrieved Colonel Armstrong's bride; but he had so long made it a habit to do what his sister wished, and her wishes so rarely inconvenienced him, that he quite amiably acquiesced, and Geoffrey, upon whom a nightmare vision of playing tierce on the uncomfortably small and inconveniently encroaching back seat of the motor, had been weighing heavily, agreed with an alacrity almost unseemly. Colonel Armstrong had not been consulted, but when the time came for them to start and Lady Hallam said to him, "My brother will bring Mrs. Crosland and her nephew, but I am sending my own car for you to bring your bride back to me," the light in his eyes, the tremor in his voice, as he thanked her, told her

that she had given him his heart's desire. Now, as he watched the water rippling beneath the narrow silver bridge the moon had thrown between the dark hull of the ship and the dingy docks of Liverpool, suddenly, gripping heart and brain as, in olden days, the iron clip of a photographer gripped the sitter's head and forced it into position for his picture, the realisation of all that he had suffered, feared, in these long months of separation crystallised before him. He had borne the burden of each day as it had come, whether its dawning had lessened or increased it, knowing his helplessness, looking through the darkness of those long, lonely days for a face he could not see, listening for a voice he could not hear. Each day had brought its measure of suffering, and now the tale of all those days pressed one upon the other until it seemed to him incredible that he had borne them. The strain that through those past months he had braced himself to meet was over, and now, regarding it in its entirety, he was shaken, unstrung. It seemed to him now impossible to remain there in the gloom and dinginess of the docks, helpless, useless, waiting, watching. He had waited and watched too long. Out there on the moonlit water, somewhere in that great ship crowded with passengers, he knew that Rosamund also waited and watched, even as he watched and waited. Why had he not forced a permit out of somebody to get to her—*why* had he let Geoffrey go in his stead? Why *Geoffrey*, who hardly knew her by sight!

Suppose he missed her in the crush? He had been gone a long time. Passengers were pouring off the ship now—wives clinging to the arms of the husbands they had come to meet; fathers carrying children closely held in their welcoming arms; sons carefully guiding their mothers through the throng; but of Rosamund there was no sign. The hurrying crowd of dark, unknown figures seemed to him a nightmare engulfing him, separating him from Rosamund, shutting him out from the ship where she looked vainly for his coming. How weary she must be waiting thus after her voyage! Fear gripped and held him. Was it certain that she was indeed on board this ship? What if, at the last moment, her mother had been ill, unfit to travel? Impatiently George Armstrong shook himself—he was a nervous fool! Were Rosamund not on board the ship she would have cabled.

He had waited quietly, if not patiently, through weeks of racking anxiety, during which no word of or from her had come to him; through further weeks when news had come, at first exhilarating him as with a draught of new wine, then parching heart and soul in the longing for yet another draught. Yet now he could not wait an hour!

Resolutely he set himself to pace up and down. Geoffrey had warned him not to look for them until the stream of passengers had cleared away. This was not yet; the docks were black with passengers and packages. He looked sea-

wards, but the waters, rising and falling, coquetting with the moonlight, seemed to mock him. The moonbeam pathway still shimmered, a magic silver streak of light, but beneath it lay cruel depths, cold and dark; the bridge was but illusion, the depths reality.

George Armstrong on this December day in the fourteenth year of the twentieth century, as he strode up and down the docks of Liverpool, suffered the tortures of Tantalus.

A girl's voice broke in upon the tempest of his thoughts.

"Is this really England, Tom?" it asked.

A man's laugh answered her: a young, happy laugh. "Well, it's the entrance, the husk—a bit dirty and rough, perhaps, but it keeps the kernel for us safe enough."

The girl gave a contented little sigh.

"So I'm safe in the tight little island at last!" she said.

George Armstrong's eyes followed her. Had she, too, been held a bondwoman in alien lands? She and her companion were walking rapidly; in another moment they were lost in the crowd of travellers surging towards the exit. Yet surely the crowd was thinning now! Anxiously he peered through the hurrying groups. Yes; certainly the rearguard thinned. Hastily he retraced his steps. Scattered groups straggled past him; tired, querulous voices complained fretfully of passport examination, luggage difficulties, inefficient, or insufficient, porters: a hundred worries dragged from the past to cloud

the present; others joyously leaping from past to future, questioning of those at home, hastening to greet them. Through all these George Armstrong made his way, halting at last close to the landing-place.

The ship was not yet emptied. In groups and singly the passengers came out upon the landing-stage. He watched and waited; every now and then some slight delay broke their line, and his heart leapt within him. Now surely she would come! But once more the file of dark, shadowy figures formed up, passing out silently on to the dock.

A cloud had drifted across the moon, and through the dull lights of the landing-stage these sombre forms drifted away into the night, and still he stood alone. Slowly the moments passed and presently a silver shaft shot through the cloud that hid the moon. The shadows softened, opened, and through them, flinging back the darkness like a heavy cloak, the moon shone out once more. A ray of it caught the gold of soft, fair hair beneath a sable toque, as Rosamund von Steinberg, closely followed by Geoffrey Leigh, crossed the deck of the great liner. The high collar of her long fur cloak framed her face, in which the soft pink colour went and came as her eyes searched the darkness. Yet it was he who saw her first, the fair face framed in dusky sables, coming towards him, stepping out into the moonlight. He leapt to meet her.

"Rosamund! My darling——"

Her hands were in his, and Geoffrey, eagerly

helping Mrs. Crosland with her cloak and boa, had turned his back on them, as had Colonel Crosland who was busy with bags and rugs. It seemed that they were alone. Only for a moment, however. The next Mrs. Crosland's soft, but incisive, accents broke the silence.

"It seems to me that we have spent about enough time on this ship," she said decidedly. "Where's the auto?"

Then Colonel Armstrong stepped forward.

"Just outside here," he said quietly; "I hope you are not very tired?"

"I'm afraid I am," she answered. "Sea voyages are no rest cure for me. What I want is a good solid bed that keeps its place instead of behaving like a child's rocking-horse or a merry-go-round at a fair."

"Then let us go," George said quickly. "Where is Colonel Crosland?"

"Here," a quiet voice answered, and a thin, middle-aged man, whose keen eyes seemed instantly to absorb every detail of his surroundings, came quickly forward, holding out a friendly hand in greeting.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Colonel Armstrong," he said cordially. "We are going to be cousins, and I hope we shall be friends."

"I hope so too," George answered warmly.

As they talked, Geoffrey Leigh's short-sighted eyes had been peering through the shadows. "Where's Lord Westwood?" he asked.

"In the motor. He was afraid of standing about in the wind. He's so subject to neuritis.

Indeed, Lady Hallam ordered him not to risk it," Colonel Armstrong answered.

"It is exceedingly kind of Lord Westwood to come in to meet us," Mrs. Crosland said, "and it would be folly for anybody but a man in love to wait about in this wind-swept place when there is any sort of a shelter to sit in." She shivered as she spoke, and Rosamund tried to draw the furs more closely about her fragile form, but her mother shook her head.

"It's no use, my dear. The cold has got under my skin, right into my bones. Let us hurry to the auto."

Lord Westwood was waiting for them and the cordiality of his welcome, the warmth of his hospitality, brought a sense of mental comfort as pervading as the material comfort of the well-cushioned car with its fur rugs and hot-water tins. Mrs. Crosland leant back with a sigh as the rug was tucked closely round her.

"I always thought the English didn't understand comfort," she said thoughtfully, "but I know now that they do."

Lord Westwood laughed.

"Like other nations, we understand *our own* comfort," he answered; "also, we don't like half-measures, and hot-water bottles and fur rugs are the proper complements of a closed car. If we want to be cold we have an open one."

Quickly they sped through the ugly streets and smug suburbs of the town, and as they went fields opened out, houses hid themselves in trees, and cottages ventured forth to the roadside.

They were out in the country now, but no vista of moonlight upon woods or water could induce Mrs. Crosland to stir in her warm nest of furs, and to George Armstrong and Rosamund, in the car that followed Lord Westwood's through the still clearness of the December night, town and country were all one. Their car was also furnished with fur rug and hot-water tin, but the rug was on the floor, the hot-water tin pushed aside, and George Armstrong, with Rosamund's head upon his shoulder, his arms about her, was saying over and over again: "At last, at last!"

These words seemed to him the only two left in the English language.

CHAPTER X

WESTWOOD PLACE

"We parted: sweetly gleam'd the stars
And sweet the vapour-braided blue,
Low breezes fann'd the belfry bars
As homeward by the Church I drew.
The very graves appear'd to smile,
So fresh they rose in shadow'd swells;
'Dark porch,' I said, 'and silent aisle,
There comes a sound of marriage bells.'"

ALFRED TENNYSON: *The Letters.*

A WORLD filled with sunshine, so softly mellow as to make the December morning seem an out-of-season birth of spring. Not a breath stirred the bare, delicate twigs of the great oak-trees for which Westwood Place had been famous from the days of Henry VI. and of his son Prince Edward, who in 1459-1461 spent many months in Cheshire raising an army against the Yorkists and, mere boy though he was, made a great impression upon the local magnates before his death at Tewkesbury. One massive, battered trunk in Westwood Park was, indeed, known throughout the country as Edward's Oak, and should a stranger question any labourer as to why it was so called, he would be answered: "I dunno, but my father called it Edward's Oak and his father called it Edward's Oak and so do I." Thus tradition descends, and when a tree's birthday is uncertain

it is at least comforting that it should have a name-day. An old bridge, built of faded bricks, led across the great lake and beyond it the ground sloped gently upwards towards the "Fore-Court," as the stretch of parkland before the house was still called, albeit more than three hundred years had elapsed since any fore-court stood there; yet still, in some strange fashion, the grass where it had stood seemed sweeter than in any other portion of the park and here the cattle ever gathered, unless driven off elsewhere.

The house itself, standing a little back from the place where the old house with the fore-court had stood, presented itself under an ample façade of Georgian days, opulent, dignified and ugly. Yet behind the wide white frontage were curious glints of old red tiles, a turret here, a chimney there, and even, tucked away in a corner, a mullioned attic window.

Lord Westwood was very proud of that window and sometimes said that he would tear the false white face from the old Jacobean house it hid and copy every window from the attic room. It was, indeed, only his love of light and warmth that restrained him. He shivered as he thought of stripping off anything that stood between him and the damp and cold, or of erecting barriers between the sunlight of his rooms, even were those barriers the beautiful lines of mullioned windows; wherefore the placid Georgian façade still stood, widely visible against its background of giant oaks: the oaks that formed the famous triple turf avenues that led into the woods beyond.

Far back, some old tiled roofs, whose red had softened into russet with the passing years, marked the farm-buildings of the house, the store-rooms of its food. Peace and plenty seemed the keynote of this world of sunshine, yet full half of those who had worked in house, woods, park, garden and even on the home farm, were fighting now in France and Flanders for this tranquil, prosperous land.

Presently a sound of bells, silvery, joyous bells, rang out from the little chapel that stood somewhat behind and to one side of the house. Instantly the hall door opened and the stately old butler stepped out into the porch. Two miniature footmen stood behind him, their little persons held carefully erect, trying their hardest to copy something of the air of respectful interest with which the butler's whole attitude was instinct, yet their young faces glowing with uncontrollable excitement. To be footmen at fourteen and to wait at a wedding-breakfast were, they felt, distinctions not within reach of every boy. Bells and music filled the air. Even the cattle raised their heads and looked with lazy inquiry towards the little chapel whence the triumphant chords of the Wedding March crashed out into the clear soft air. Soon the chapel door opened and, framed for a moment in the dark oak beams in which it was set, Rosamund stood, leaning on her husband's arm, looking out across the sun-strewn park. The pale mauve of her hat and gown, the bunch of violets at her waist, the bouquet in her hand, made her seem a vision of spring, so young and

happy did she look as she stood smiling at the sunshine. The next moment she stepped out into it, and the youngest of the miniature footmen could no longer contain himself.

"Don't she look sweet?" he murmured. "Love among the roses!"

The butler turned a frowning face upon him, and the lad shrank hurriedly into his livery; but his companion whispered mischievously: "They're vi'lets and not roses, anyway, silly!"

Mrs. Crosland, on Lord Westwood's arm, followed closely after the bride and bridegroom, and Geoffrey Leigh, with Maud Westwood, a beautiful, dark-haired girl of eighteen, her father's only child and mistress of his house, felt that self-sacrifice is sometimes bearable. Lady Hallam, walking with the bride's cousin, Colonel Crosland, who had come over from America in order to give her away, brought up the procession.

It had been decided that since the wedding must perforce take place at so early an hour, there should be a real breakfast immediately after it, since the persons principally concerned seemed unable even to contemplate eggs and bacon before the ceremony, and the rest of the party, fortified by tea and bread-and-butter, had no objection to waiting for them. In the long dining-room, looking out upon the park, the old mahogany table gleamed with silver and with the rich colourings of an old green-and-gold Worcester breakfast-set, flanking the massed violets which made a flower-bed of the centre.

On the sideboard, to the great joy of the miniature footmen, stood a wedding-cake and

an old cut-glass decanter containing the cherry brandy for which Westwood was almost as famous as for its oaks, although the cherry-trees responsible for the fruit from which it was made claimed no royal godfather. They were, however, of ancient lineage and it was a tradition in the Westwood family that its choicest liqueur brandy should be wedded to them, wherefore, as Lord Westwood remarked, no cup more wholesome, cheering and agreeable, could be found in which to drink healths in the early morning. To Maud Westwood, however, as to the youthful footmen, the cake was the centre of interest.

"I simply love wedding-cake," she confided to Geoffrey Leigh, "so I insisted upon having one. I should like one every day, but they say it's unlucky to have wedding-cakes when there isn't a wedding. However, I have made up my mind that when I am twenty-five I shall order a huge one and invite all my spinster friends to tea to eat it."

"But why wait?" Geoffrey asked earnestly. "Wouldn't it be simpler, and perhaps luckier, to marry and have one for your wedding?"

"I—don't know," Maud answered hesitatingly, and suddenly, for some occult reason, she blushed—a most becoming blush, which made Geoffrey feel that even enemy aliens had their uses. At this moment, however, the cake having been cut and slices duly handed round, accompanied by the famous cherry brandy, Lord Westwood raised his glass to toast the bride and bridegroom. He did it charmingly, with the delicate gallantry which sits so easily

upon a man who has a beautiful daughter to protect him. George Armstrong beamed as he listened. In his apprehension no compliment to his wife, no congratulation to himself could be excessive: he had won his heart's desire, and the two words in which he replied were as fervent as they were brief. Lord Westwood turned, smiling, to Mrs. Crosland.

"There is a man who knows what he wants and has got it," he said cordially.

"Englishmen are always sure of things and sure that they will get them," she answered. She had made up her mind to give her daughter to the man, and she had done it, but at the moment the fact that she *had* done it oppressed her.

Lord Westwood agreed.

"I'm afraid, as a national habit, it is a little overdone, but, after all, some of the most wonderful things that have ever been accomplished have only been pulled off because we were cocksure we could do them."

"That's what makes your soldiers such splendid fellows," Colonel Crosland remarked appreciatively.

"Our bumptious boys," Lady Hallam said, smiling.

Lord Westwood nodded.

"Yes; it's just the qualities that make the young officer intolerable in peace that make him invaluable in war. In ordinary life his bumptiousness is very boring; but if he weren't certain that he knew better than the enemy, and was a bigger, better, finer man in every way, we should miss our daily list of gallant deeds."

"And what a list it is!" Colonel Crosland exclaimed. "Let us drink to them." He raised his glass as he spoke; but Lord Westwood, although his fingers held the slender stem of the old-fashioned wide-mouthed glass, did not at once respond.

"Our soldiers!" he said gravely. "I wonder, Colonel Crosland, what you and your country really think of our soldiers and of their foe?"

Colonel Crosland faced him squarely, his glass still raised.

"Well," he said, speaking slowly, deliberately, "America is a big place. It has many worlds. I can only speak for my own world, the eastern world, and myself; and there's one thing we've learnt in these weeks, watching you and watching Germany."

"And that is——?" Lord Westwood asked, in the silence that had fallen round the table as Colonel Crosland spoke.

"Well," he said again, "I think we've learned who's going to win this war. Germany has been preparing, organising, arming, for forty years, and she hasn't won it yet. The British Empire has been preparing for four months, and she isn't beaten yet."

The clear, distinct words, that had cut through the silence of the room, ceased; yet, for a moment, the hush that had fallen upon his listeners held them still.

Then at last Lord Westwood raised his glass.

"To our soldiers!" he said. "God bless them!"

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